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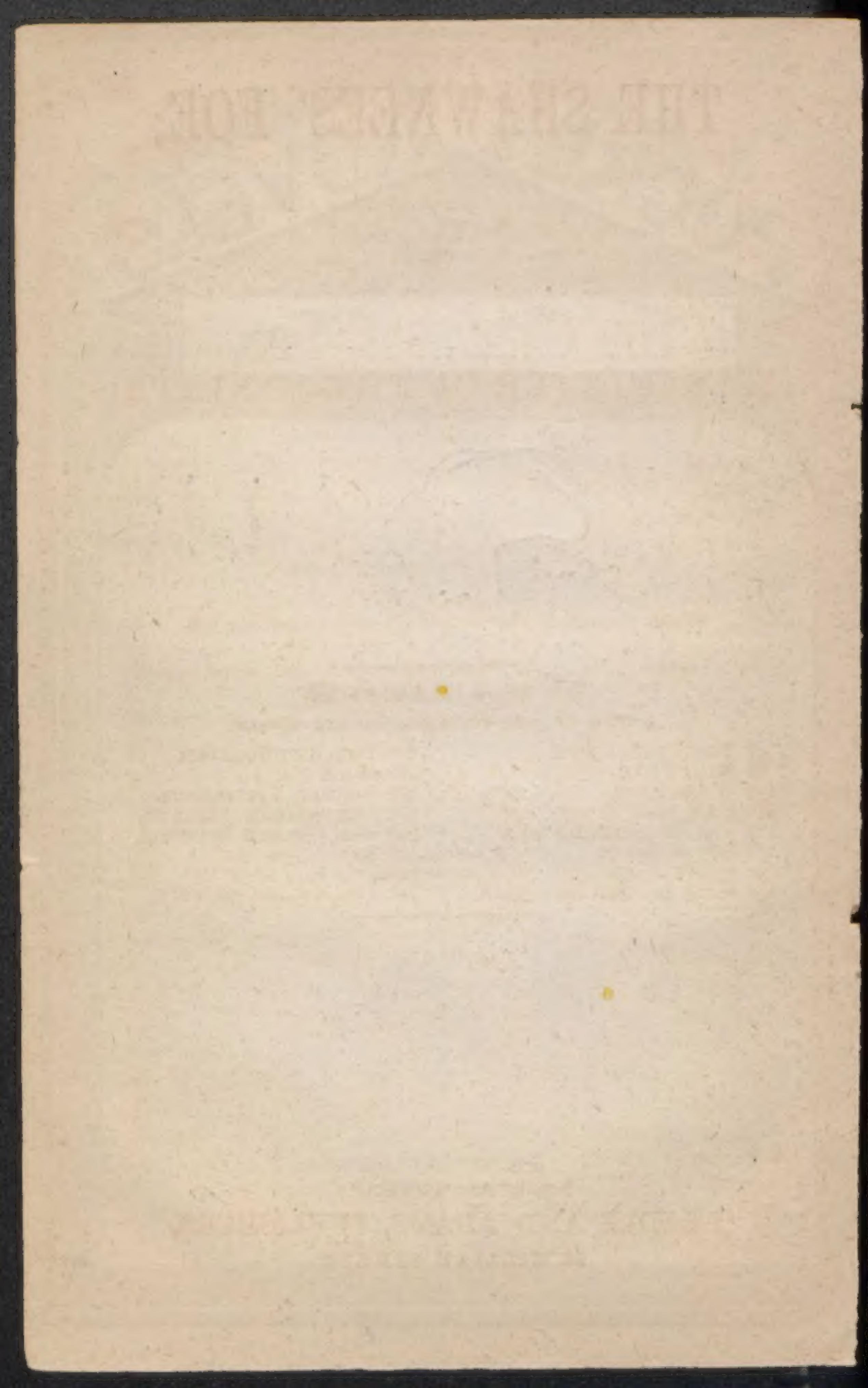
BEADLE'S

Illuminated.
Ten Cents.

POCKET NOVELS

The Shawnees' Foe.





THE SHAWNEES' FOE;

OR,

THE HUNTER OF THE JUNIATA.

BY W. J. HAMILTON,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING POCKET NOVELS:

13 THE FRENCH SPY.	144 THE RED SCALPER.
30 EAGLE-EYE.	165 WILD NAT.
102 WILD RUBE.	174 BORDER VENGEANCE.
110 NICK, THE SCOUT.	176 THE SONS OF LIBERTY.
112 THE CROSSED KNIVES.	180 THE PRAIRIE SCOURGE.
122 KIT BIRD.	181 RED LIGHTNING.
124 GIANT PETE.	186 THE RED OUTLAW.
138 MAID OF THE MOUNTAIN.	187 THE SWAMP SCOUT.

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THE SHAWNEES' FOE.

CHAPTER I.

THE FOREST SCOUTS.

A DEEP river ran down from a mountain gorge, sparkling in the sunrays, and hid itself in the forest beyond the little opening. Far away rose the lofty peaks of the mountains, spurs of the Blue Ridge. The river was the Juniata, and the date that time in Colonial history when the French were struggling with the English for possession in America. Their forts, following the footsteps of the adventurous La Salle, lined the rivers from Quebec to New Orleans, cutting off the English from the fertile land west of the mountains. The French always had shown, in their diplomatic relations with the Indians, a better knowledge of these people than the English; hence, it is not at all remarkable, that, while the English retained the *nominal* support of the Six Nations, most of the other tribes sided with the French. The Jesuits, wily and designing men, full of enthusiasm and love of their religion, penetrated the country in every direction, making journeys of the most appalling length and danger, hoping to enhance the glory and power of the church of Rome. Whatever could be said of the acts of these men, they were true to their principles, and to the religion which sent them into journeys over the face of a wild country. The bloody, stern and unrelenting manner in which they looked upon the death of enemies of the church, was the result of their pernicious teachings, borrowed from the Inquisition. The English hated and feared them, knowing that they had done more to enhance the glory of France, than her soldiers. Men of culture and refinement, who had gained renown in the world of letters, like Fathers La Salle and Hennipen, dared every danger, endured every conceivable hardship, for the religion they loved. It is not surprising that the simple Indians looked upon them as superiors of the idle and

dissipated Englishmen whom they met, or of the stolid Dutch. And when they came to the valley of the Ohio, they were received with open arms.

About the year 17—, a band of enterprising Frenchmen came down the river from Niagara, a post established long before, drove away a party of workmen who were employed upon the ground by the Ohio Company, and began a fort, which they named De Quesne. The employees of the Ohio Company, retreating to their homes, carried the news of the coming of the French. The English Governor of Virginia at once sent out spies to ascertain the number and designs of the enemy.

On the afternoon of a clear day, in the month of May, 18—, the sound of blows, and the cries of a boyish voice in pain, broke the stillness of a primeval forest in the western part of the State of Pennsylvania, near the spot we have described. Mingled with the sound of the blows and the voice of the boy, came the hoarser tones of a man, reviling some person in no measured terms. The persons who made the noise broke through the bushes and revealed the forms of a man and boy, clad in the coarse homespun common to the region. The man held in his hand a long beech rod, with which he was beating the boy vigorously, while the lad responded to every blow by yelling loudly. Both merit a description. The man was of powerful build, with a lean, but good-humored, jovial face, and a sharp, cunning eye. His arms were of wonderful length, reaching almost to his knees when he stood erect. Over his shoulder was slung a gun of the best description used in those times, a long powder-horn, and bullet-pouch. His waist was encircled by a girdle of tough deer-skin, in which was thrust a long and dangerous-looking knife.

The boy was a fat, healthy looking fellow, with an enormous head, crowned by a thick brush of flaxen hair. His mouth was in keeping with his head, and of such dimensions, that, when open, as it was at the present moment, his head seemed half severed. His nose, literally, was "nothing to speak of," being nearly concealed from view by his flabby cheeks, distended by loud howls for mercy, of which he was getting little at the hands of the man. Making for a low

hemlock, he went up it with an agility hardly to be looked for in so bulky a lad, scrambled to the top, and looked down upon his persecutor, who made no attempt to follow him, but stood at the foot of the tree, lighting his pipe.

"Come down here, white-head," he said.

"I've got lickin' enough for *one* day, I reckon," answered the boy. "I ain't comin' down."

"Stay there, then. All there is about it, I'll tan your hide like fun when you *do* come down, if you wait, and I won't touch you ef you *come down now*. What do you say?"

"I'll come down," said the boy, promptly. "Drabbit it, though, what *did* you lick me for?"

"Didn't I tell you?"

"No, you didn't. You jest begun to lace me before you said a word, and I ain't a-goin' to stand it."

"Oh, you ain't? How you goin' to help yourself?"

"Don't know," replied the boy, slowly descending from the tree. "But, when any one licks me, I want to know why they do it. *Lickin'* is all right; don't say nothin' agin *that*. Boys was born to be licked, I s'pose, but, the thing is right here, when you lick a boy, let him know why you lick him, and then you'll see how he'll appreciate it."

"I don't give reasons for every thing, young man; but this I'll tell you: I was stalking a deer, and was jest going to pull on him when you come floundering and a-plunging through the bushes and scared my game away. I told you, when I brought you away from Cumberland, that I'd look to you to keep clear of me when I was hunting. You heard me say that often enough, you white-headed young varmint you!"

"Didn't you say that you wanted to know when any one stopped at the cabin? Eh? Course you did! You know *you* did! Waal, how was I to know that you was arter a deer? You want to see Chris Gist when he comes, don't you? Say!"

"Who?" cried the hunter quickly.

"Oh, you are mighty sharp *now*, *you* are, after goin' a lickin' of a feller for nothin'. Couldn't you a sung out when you heard me a-comin', eh? And, could I a helped a-comin', eh? And, don't you want to see Chris, eh? Oh, you ain't

half so smart as you think you are. Don't you go a looking for that whip now; you promised not to go a lickin' me if I'd come down."

"Is Chris at the cabin?"

"Yes, he is."

"Why didn't you blow the horn?"

"Chris wouldn't have it; he said it wa'nt no use to go and tell the Indians just where to find you by blowing of a horn."

"You blow *your* horn loud enough. Which is the wust, I should like to know, to blow a horn, or to have *you* go howling through the woods, you great lubberly, overgrown, white-headed elephant, you! Git along back and cook something to eat; cook some of that fish, since you skeered away the deer. I didn't give you enough of that birch. But, git on! Don't waste time."

The boy lumbered on before, and they hurried through the woods. A walk of about a mile brought them to another opening upon the river bank, where, under a huge hill, the hunter had built him a hut of logs. Here he lived with no other company than that of the boy, who kept house for him, cooking the provisions, and making away with a fair portion of his cookery. This man, John Robinson, was known along the frontier as an active and vigilant scout and spy, fit to be the companion of the famous guide and scout whom he found waiting for him in the house, Christopher Gist. This man, famous for his connection with Washington in his perilous visit to Fort Du Quesne, was by nature gifted with the attributes of the true forest-ranger. He was fearless in danger, never flurried by any unexpected chance, ready and willing to peril his own safety for the good of his country. The Governor of Virginia knew him and his character well, and entrusted him with the most important matters.

"What brought you this way, Chris?" demanded Robinson, after they had shaken hands. "Josh, you white-headed, staring fool, if you don't put to and cook something, I'll skin you alive! The Indian that would be mean enough to dirty his fingers by teching your scalp, must be *awful* mean. But, for all that, I expect you won't have any hair when I come back *this* time."

"Now, don't," sniveled the boy. "You make me feel bad—now you do, *really*! Make him quit, Chris; do."

Chris laughed. "I don't think you are in any danger just at present, my lad; but I am going to take Captain Jack away. In my opinion, you must keep pretty close, for the French are in the country, and when the Jesuits get among the Indians, no man's life is safe. Keep your eyes about you, my lad, and when you hear the Indians, make for the limestone caves upon the river."

"You ain't goin' to leave me alone?"

"Nothing else. We are going on a service of great difficulty and danger, and do not want to be hampered by such a fellow as you."

"Oh, but I kin keep up, Chris," cried the boy eagerly. "There's a good deal more in me than you think; now mind I tell you. You jest let me go along with you and see how well I will do! I can't stay here all alone. I'd be afraid. No one likes to stay all alone out here, do they?"

"Bosh!" was the unsympathetic answer. "You don't think we will take such a lumbering animal as you down the river. It's a hundred miles, easy. Those great flat feet of yours would be sore enough before you reached the end of your journey. And with all that, Major Washington would not have you with us; and, after all, he is the commander of the expedition."

"Where are you going?" asked Captain Jack, as Robinson was called, along the border.

"To Little Meadows first. You know the new fort the French have built at the joining of the waters. Our men were there building a fort, and the Frenchers drove them away, and now they are trying to make friends with the Half King, as they call the chief of the Miamis. We are going to stop *that*."

"Who is Washington? Did I ever see him?"

"No. If you had, you would never ask the question. He was a surveyor from Virginia, a boy in years, and yet one whom men would follow into any danger, confident in him. When you see him, you shall say with me that he has a wonderful face. He is a man in every enterprise, for what boy at his age would undertake a service such as this with pleasure; yes, beg the privilege of going?"

"Where is he?"

"He is waiting for us a few miles away upon the river. I turned aside at his orders, that I might get you to join us. He has heard of you, partly through me, and wishes your advice and assistance."

"And he shall have it. Josh, you owl, do you stop gawking at me, and go on with your cooking! I am goin' to clear my gun. If supper is not ready for me when I come in, I'll put a coal of fire in the cellar kitchen of them leggins of yours. I will, you young white-head."

"I ain't afraid," was the sulky reply. "Why don't you take some one of your size, and not go a-pickin' on a poor boy that ain't got no father nor mother? I ain't a goin' to stand it, neither."

"Ain't I promised to be a father to you, you ternal skunk? Ain't I now? Git on with that cooking, if you can. If you can't, dang it, I ken help you, fire you!"

Josh went on with his cooking, growling audibly at the hardship of "cooking for a man as licked him for nothing at all." Fish from the river, which Captain Jack had speared that day, with corn-cake baked in the ashes, formed the meal, to which the two men, as well as Josh, who always enjoyed his own cooking, did ample justice. This done, they took their arms, filled their haversacks with corn-bread and bacon, and started out on the trail. It was nearly five o'clock in the afternoon when they set out, leaving poor Josh, weeping and staring disconsolately, on the threshold of the cabin. All of a sudden his howling stopped!

"Something has occurred to him," said Captain Jack. "Perhaps he has thought of a new dish, and means to try it in my absence, the young rascal!"

"Where did you pick him up?" said Chris.

"When I was at Cumberland last. His father was killed by the Indians, but, by good luck which seems to follow him, he escaped to the post. Anybody but he would have been dead long ago. Why, he was tackled by a bear in the woods, when he was going for the cow, and climbed a tree. That is his refuge in any case. The bear climbed after him, and chased him off the limb into the river; bear tumbled after him, fell upon a sharp stake in the river-bed, and floated off

helplessly. If it had been me, the bear would have made a meal off me. Another time he got into a limestone cave to hide from a storm, and found a whole litter of grizzly cubs there. He stole one and ran away. Bear chased him, and he took to a tree. As the grizzly could not climb, she lay down under the tree to wait. He staid there all night, yelling for help. If I had not come by, on my way to the cabin, and shot the bear, he might have staid there to this day."

"Is he useful to you?"

"Rather. He is a good cook, but I have to lick the cantankerous young cub about twice a day to keep him in order. He has no judgment. He would blunder into the midst of a Shawnee war-party, and ask the chief if he had such a thing as a pipeful of tobacco about his clothes. The only hope for him would be that they would see that he is a born natural, in which case no Indian would lay a hand upon him. That is a part of their creed. A fool is protected, because the singer of Gitche Manitou has been laid upon him. Hist!"

The low-voiced exclamation caused Gist to pause quickly, and look to his arms. Before he could draw the knife upon which his fingers had instinctively dropped, the bushes parted, and a fearful figure darted into the path. It was an Indian in his war-paint, black as night. Upon the breast, in livid white, was painted a grinning death's-head. He was over six feet in height. His weapons were a long bow and arrow, strapped to his back, a long knife, and a hatchet. The two latter weapons were held in either powerful hand. He planted himself directly in the path, and demanded, in a hoarse voice:

"What does the white man want in the land of the Shawnee? I am Wah-ta-ha, the Vulture of my tribe. Let the white men go back as they came."

Captain Jack and his companion were no new men in Indian tactics. They did not know how many savages were lurking in the thickets, waiting to obey the orders of the great Shawnee chief. They knew him, too, and that it was his habit to meet the English fearlessly in this way, and warn them out of the country. He was fearless of danger, and would have faced a dozen men as readily as two. Captain Jack spoke first.

"If the chief has been long upon the trail, he must have

heard the name of Captain Jack. Does the Vulture of the Shawnee think we are cowards, to turn back from one man?"

"Captain Jack has spoken," replied the chief. "His name is known to the Shawnees. He is very brave; but the gourd which goes often to the spring, is broken at last. The Shawnees love those who are friends to Father Unas. We love Father Unas. He never takes a knife in his hand. Where is the man that would rise up and strike him? But, men have come after him who are not of his race. They take arms in their hands and strike the Indians. We will not have it so, and there is paint upon the face of the Shawnees."

"The belts of the French are too bright for the Vulture of the Shawnee. If they were a little brighter, he would raise his hands against the sons of Father Unas."

"No!" thundered the Indian. "The white man lies! The Shawnees love the sons of Unas, and will not dig up the hatchet against them. But, these white men who come from the South, must go back as they came. Do not the Shawnees know when Captain Jack and Christopher are on the trail?"

"You know me, then?" said Gist.

"Ugh! yes."

"We will not go back," said Captain Jack.

"A dark path is open before you," said the chief. "Pits open before your feet. You will stumble and fall. The war-cry is loud along the river, and all but the sons of the Half King are ready for the battle. The Vulture would be a friend to Captain Jack and to Christopher. Go to the boy who has built his fire by the side of the river. Tell him that he is very young, and may make a warrior when he is older; but he is too young to be upon the trail. For the boy who howls like the panther in the woods, the Indian will not harm him."

"Josh is safe," laughed Captain Jack. "The Vulture has a sharp beak, but we do not fear him."

"Let Captain Jack go back, or go on, it will be the same. His blood be upon his own head."

"Stand aside," said Christopher, in anger. "We have no time to waste in talking."

"The Vulture is a great warrior. If he chose, he could

take the scalps of Captain Jack and Christopher, but he will not do it yet."

"You are a modest fellow," laughed Captain Jack. "Let us pass."

The Indian stood aside moodily, and let them pass. There was an expression in his face which boded no good, but they had no time to stay, and hurried on down the river. The Indian looked after them until they were out of sight, and then followed cautiously on the trail.

"Captain Jack has yet to know the Vulture. Would he pass by if he knew that the scalp of his wife hangs at my lodge-pole, and that some one he loved is called my daughter? His scalp shall dry in a Shawnee lodge; that lodge shall be that of the Vulture of the Shawnee. Ugh!"

Captain Jack was well known along the border. Years before, he had come to the banks of the Juniata, with his wife and daughter, and built him a cabin. For two years he lived a happy life, subsisting on the game his rifle had brought down and the corn his own hand had planted. His wife, one of those noble women who dared every danger for the love of the man to whom she had sworn to be true, made his cabin bright for his coming. Tired of the life in the great towns, he moved in a new atmosphere when once in the forest, and began to love it. But his happiness was not to continue. At last came an event often repeated in these fearful times. He was out hunting on the hills one day, after the French had planted their first forts on the lake and French creek. Miles away upon the mountain, he saw the light of a burning dwelling, in the direction of his home. Girding up his loins, the sturdy hunter ran down the mountain side, and never staid in his headlong course until he stood above the ruins of his once happy home. By the side of the smoking pile lay the body of his dear wife, scalped and bloody. There were marks of moccasin tracks all about the dwelling, and he knew that the Indians had been there. But where was his child?

He ran round about the smoking cabin calling her name. But the forest only echoed back the pitiful cry. She was gone!

He threw himself upon the black timbers and hurled them

aside with frantic haste. Perhaps the child lay dead beneath them. He would rescue her body, at least, and lay it beside its mother. His search was in vain. When every timber had been laid aside, no trace of the little girl could be found.

He went again to the trail, and there, in the soft soil, he found the marks of her little feet, and knew that she lived, but a prisoner. The blow was too heavy for him to bear, and with a passionate cry, the strong man fell beside the body of his wife, in a dreadful swoon. When he came back to consciousness, the stars had come out one by one in the sky, and he knew that he was alone. He rose silently, and found a spade, with which he dug a grave for the wife of his bosom, sobbing like a child as he laid her to rest beside the silent river. Above the grave he knelt in the pale moonlight and registered a vow that he would never spare an Indian upon the war-trail.

He kept his oath well. The Indians learned to fear him and apply to him terrible names. The Shawnees knew him as the "Black Hunter of the Juniata," and the Delawares as the "Black Rifle," and the French as "Indian Slayer." These sombre names were given from the fact that his skin had been tanned by exposure, to the color of a native. To the whites he was known as Captain Jack, and he held a commission under the colony in that rank. His men were settlers who dwelt along the Juniata and the Susquehanna, and who would gather when the signal was sent among them, as Clan Alpine rose at the summons of the fiery cross.

Their movements were rapid. The Indians never knew when or where to strike them. Now they would be on the banks of the Juniata; again on the Susquehanna, or at Forts Augusta, Franklin or Loudon. They armed themselves with hunting knives, rifles and hatchets. Their dress was the buckskin hunting-shirt, leggings and moccasins. Their daring lives had made them acquainted with every mile of ground between the two rivers. The inhabitants of the wild country revered the name of Captain Jack as much as the French and Indians hated it. He could speak all the dialects of the tribes, and had been for many months a prisoner among the Delawares, from whom he escaped by a subtly conceived stratagem. The Governor of Pennsylvania knew

the value of the man to the frontier settlements, and had, as has been stated, given him a commission under the colony.

"Major Washington is waiting for us, then?" said this remarkable man, tightening his sword-belt as he spoke.

"Yes," replied Gist. "We shall reach him in an hour."

"How did you know him?"

"Don't you remember the time I went to Venango with him? I never saw such a time. It was midwinter and fearfully cold. Three times an Ottawa snapped his gun at him and missed. He pulled once when the gun was not six inches from his breast, and that boy only looked him in the eye in a cool, contemptuous manner, as if he mocked any attempt upon his life. Then the way he managed Captain Joncaire and that devil of an agent, La Force. It was really and truly wonderful. He was afraid that the 'Half King,' who was of the party, would get drunk, and make friends with the French. That Joncaire had tried the game before. Washington kept the chiefs in the tents all day, but La Force found out that they were with us, and then nothing would do but they must come to quarters. There they got drunk as fifers, and one of them danced the war-dance on the dining-table. You never saw Indians so cut up as they were on the next day."

"What does the Major intend to do?"

"I really don't know. His forces are somewhere below Great Meadows, and he *would* come up after you. He has confidence in the *Provincials*. This great general, who is coming soon, is said to despise us. I hope it is not so."

CHAPTER II.

THE YOUNG LEADER.

ABOUT seven in the evening, the two men came up with the party of whom they were in search. They consisted of four backwoodsmen, two of whom, being Indian traders, knew the country between the two rivers. Van Braane, the

swordsman and interpreter, and Washington himself. He advanced to meet them with that winning grace which characterized him even in early age, and became marked when he reached manhood. His dress was severe in its simplicity, and his arms were the same as those of the men by whom he was surrounded.

Dinwiddie, knowing the fearless nature of the boy, for he was but a boy in years, had eagerly accepted his services for this dangerous enterprise. He was expected to go among tribes who were hostile to the English. But he never thought of danger, in the line of his duty. His attendants were chosen with especial care with regard to their skill in woodcraft, and were brave men, ready to face any danger for their young leader.

They passed the night upon the bank of the river. At early morning the young soldier was upon his feet, and ready for his work. He sent two of his men downstream in a canoe, and with the rest of the party, proceeded on foot. Gist was uneasy and the young leader saw it, and came to his side.

"You are uneasy, Christopher," said he. "Why is it?"

"I think we are followed," said Gist. "I do not like the warning the Vulture gave us last night."

"I do not know the man."

"He is a chief of the Shawnees, who claim the land which Penn bought. A bloodthirsty savage, trusting to his remarkable strength. Many of the fearful massacres which have shocked the frontier have been ascribed to him, and yet no one has been able to say that he saw him in any battle. This may be ascribed to the fact, that none escape the weapons of the bloody band whose movements he directs. He ranges from the banks of the Susquehanna to the forks of the rivers, and woe to any lone Englishman who crosses his path."

"Did he threaten?"

"Yes. It is evident that he has been tampered with by the French."

"Do you think he is dogging us now?"

"I have no doubt of it. On the watch last night I heard some one stealing about the camp. It does not seem as if it

could be him, either. He would not make so much noise. It might have been some young warrior of his band, who had not been long upon the war-path."

They were marching steadily on by the river-side while they spoke. Washington by the side of Gist; Van Braane, Indian Slayer, and the other two men bringing up the rear. Casting his eye across the river as Gist spoke, Washington caught sight of a gigantic figure upon a bold headland on the other shore. A single glance convinced him it was the Indian of whom they had been speaking. He was leaning upon his long-bow and gazing moodily across the water at the party. As he stood there, with the rays of the rising sun falling upon him, and bringing out the death's-head upon his breast in bold relief, he looked like the arch fiend when addressing the powers of hell.

"Let the white men hear the words of a great chief. Turn back! The way to the wigwams of the Half King is long, and knives and hatchets are growing up. You will cut your feet if you tread on them."

"Shall I shoot the impudent rascal?" asked Captain Jack, unslinging the rifle at his shoulder. "I have stood about as much from him as I will take from any red-skin that ever walked. Shall I shoot him?"

"No," cried Washington, laying his hand upon the arm of the stern hunter; "let us not be the first to shed blood. Our men are too apt to kill without cause; our enterprise is such that we can not afford to make enemies."

"The Vulture does not fear any thing Captain Jack can do. If he chose he could whisper something in his ears which would make him *much* mad! Where is the squaw that he loved? Where is the little child? Does she play at his cabin door, as she played when the torch blazed and the hatchet was dug up? Ugh!"

The Indian had touched upon a sore spot in the history of the hunter. He had not always been alone. Years before other feet had pressed the grass beside his cabin on the river. Sweet lips had welcomed him back from the chase. His wife and little daughter had made his home happy. Did the chief know any thing of them, or had he heard the story from other lips?

"Wah-ta-ha," he cried, "give me back my child, if she is in your hands, and I will be your friend—will make you rich."

Captain Jack is a fool. Would the Vulture give her up to a man who would shoot him like a dog? Ugh!"

Captain Jack brought his rifle again to his shoulder, cocked and ready to fire. Wah-ta-ha made no attempt to escape, knowing that the other was a dead shot. The narrow river only separated them and between the two points it would not measure fifty yards; an attempt at flight was useless. The finger of the scout was pressing hard upon the trigger, when again Washington stopped him.

"If he knows any thing of your child, would you not lose the knowledge if you shoot him?"

Captain Jack lowered his rifle quickly. "You are right," he said. "My God, if I had fired! Speak, and speak freely, Wah-ta-ha, do you know any thing of my child?"

"The Vulture is not a child himself," was the answer; "he will not answer. When the time comes, he has a voice, and can speak. The time is not yet."

"Why do you follow us?" demanded the young major.

"Can not the Vulture fly where it will? and who shall say to Wah-ta-ha, 'thou shall go no further!' Go! You are young, and you speak to one who has been many years upon the war-path."

"Let us leave him," said Washington; "he is alone and can do us no harm."

"Wah-ta-ha," shouted the hunter, "you have made an enemy to-night. I will follow you night and day until I know all you can say of my child. Remember that the Indian Slayer is on your track!"

A fierce laugh was the only reply, and the party moved on.

"We shall hear from that fellow again," said Gist. "Do you think he knows any thing of Molly?"

"He does. How else could he learn that she is lost? I tell you, Christopher, I will dog that Indian like his shadow, when once free from this enterprise. Curse him, curse him!" he hissed as he strode away. Then he paused and exclaimed, "He shall never know a quiet hour, where I can give him unrest. He shall give up his knowledge of my child."

"Do not distress yourself, captain," said Washington; "this thing will come out in God's good time. Have faith in Him."

"I have faith; I do trust Him," replied the hunter. "We are rough men in the forest; perhaps our religion savors of the woods and hills, but we all acknowledge a Supreme controlling power. I have trusted it all these years, but until to day I have never seen my child, nor heard her name spoken by human lips; my darling Molly."

"How old was she?"

"Six years; she must be more than sixteen now, a woman, if she lives. I should not know her, and I never loved a being in my time as I loved her. Let us say no more of it now, sir; it can not make the matter any better."

They camped that night at the fall of the river waiting for the canoes and baggage, for they had reached the fork first. Indian Slayer kept guard, for he was restless, thinking of the words of the Vulture. The stars came out one by one in the clear sky, beaming upon the sleeping figures of the party with a softened light. On either side flowed the rivers, and in front the broad Susquehanna started on its errand to join its mighty father, the Atlantic. In the forest beyond rose the shrill cry of the panther, roaming forth in search of prey. All these were familiar sights and sounds to Captain Jack, they fell upon the ear, but roused no more thought than the sighing of the wind in the branches.

All at once his ears were greeted by a new sound; it seemed as if a stick had been broken under a heavy tread. The next moment all was still as death—unnaturally still, he thought. The hunter took up his rifle and looked to the priming, giving no other sign that he had heard the noise.

In a short time he heard it again, a stealthy crawling sound of footsteps stirring the dry leaves. Then it ceased again, and he listened in vain for a repetition.

"If that is an Indian," muttered the hunter, "he deserves to be sent home to his squaws. For making half as much noise as that I would lick Josh within an inch of his life. I must find out what this means. What if the bloody thiever are outlying for the canoes? I'll wake Chris."

Touching the guide, who always slumbered lightly, he

explained in a whisper what was wanted, and then, taking his knife and hatchet, stepped over the edge of the bank and began to crawl in the direction from whence the sound had come. His foot made no sound in the forest leaves; a cat could not have crawled more carefully upon its prey than the expert backwoodsman. He knew that the hidden enemy was lying somewhere in the bushes, looking in upon the camp. What if it was the Vulture? His heart gave a great bound at the thought, and then became still again, for he knew that the Vulture was too skillful to break sticks in the woods. An Indian feels his way as cautiously as a shadow.

The advance of Captain Jack was made upon his hands and knees, feeling with his hand and clearing every inch of ground before he set his foot upon it. As he approached a thicket of low bushes, near the place from which the sound proceeded, he found his course stopped by a fallen log. Dropping cautiously upon his knees, he raised his head carefully above the log and looked into the copse. The first objects seen were a pair of moccasined feet protruding from beneath the bushes. No longer doubting, he retreated as cautiously as he had come and gave Gist the signal agreed upon between them. As soon as Gist heard the signal, he too arose, and followed in the track of his companion; he found him seated upon a log near the riverside.

"What have you found?" whispered Gist, with his lips to the ear of the other.

"An Indian."

"Where?"

He pointed to the thicket.

"Shall we take him?"

"Yes."

They made up a plan of operations, and then set out on the slow pilgrimage toward the thicket. Inch by inch they crawled forward, and looking over the log, Christopher saw the moccasined feet.

"A big fellow!" he muttered.

In the same cautious manner that had characterized their progress up to this moment, the two men crossed the log, first taking off their moccasins in order to step more carefully. The moccasins under the bushes did not stir, much to the

surprise of the guide. At the log they separated, and advanced upon opposite sides; when nearer, they could see that the prostrate form was wrapped in a blanket, and kept quiet, until they approached within five or six feet, when Captain Jack held up his hand as a signal for the other to stop. He did so and the next moment was startled by a sound, more astonishing to him than a bullet would have been, a loud and unmistakable *snore*.

An Indian asleep on the war-path! A moral and physical impossibility. Both men flung themselves upon the sleeper, and grasped him by the arms and legs. The snore was changed into a yell of terror, and a voice, which was that of the redoubtable Josh, shouted,

"Git off! Let up! Dod rot ye, g'way from me now!"

Grasping him by the neck, Captain Jack dragged his prisoner into the circle of light made by the camp-fire. There,

"One stupid moment motionless he stood,"

when his mouth opened in the most astounding and odd predictions. The whole camp started in amazement. It was a singular spectacle. In the center of the camp stood poor Josh, shaking like an aspen leaf, still collared by the irate guide, who was venting his spleen upon him in no measured tones; Gist, in silent amazement holding up his hands; Washington, an amused spectator; Van Braane venting Dutch expletives against the unlucky wretch who had broken his rest.

"You white-headed, mealy-mouthed monkey!" cried Captain Jack. "You fat ape! You great elephant! Do you know what I will do with you? I'll lace you with hickories until the blood runs down to your very heels. Can't you speak, you whelp? Can't you tell what you mean, by crawling round a camp in the night? 'Twould have served you right if I had put a bullet into you. I would, but I thought it was an honest Injin. If I had only known it was you! Why don't you speak?"

"Why don't you let me?" howled poor Josh, goaded to madness by the words of the other. "Who kin speak, when *your* mouth is open?"

"Waal, now you kin speak; *begin*! And don't lie to me. I'll lace you, I give you fair warning, in the morning, as soon

as I can see to pick out a good stout hickory. Now what are you doing here?"

"I foller'd you."

"Oh, you did. Now perhaps you will be good enough to tell me what you *foller'd* me for? Oh, *won't* I lace you in the morning, you young rat! Won't I, though? Maybe not!"

"If you talk that way, darned ef I say a word," cried Josh. "I ain't a-goin' to take it from no one. I followed you cause I wa'nt a-goin' to stay up there in the cabin and be skulped by Indians while you was gone. I s'pose you think I ain't got no feelin', don't you? Could stand to be skulped and then laugh over it, couldn't I? Oh, you are a nice seller, *you* are!"

"You hear that," cried the captain. "I left this fellow to take care of my traps, durn his hide, and you see the ingratitude of the beast. Not only does he leave my things to take care of themselves, but he comes to the camp in the night, tramping about like a mad ox, breaking sticks enough for a whole army of buffaloes, and making me crawl an' sneak after him for two hours, thinking it was Indians. Don't he need a lacin', bust him? He'll git it, though."

"How long have you been following us, my boy?" asked Washington, in a mild tone, which cooled Josh down at once.

"Ever sense *he* went away: Chris come to the cabin fur him, and I went arter him to the deer-lick, for I knowed what he was. I skeered away his deer, and he had to lick me for that, rot him. Then, when he went away I was setting in the door, crying, when it came into my head to sneak after him and never let him know I *was* after him till he got so far away he couldn't send me back. And I done it, rot him! He kin lick me, but I done it!"

Captain Jack gave him a hearty cuff, which sent him reeling. To the surprise of every one, the boy gave back the cuff with all his might, and then climbed a tree so quickly that the guide could not catch him. This was his refuge. When he had committed any unusual act against Captain Jack, he climbed a tree until his anger had time to evaporate, knowing well that he would never take the trouble to climb after him.

"What shall we do with him?" said Washington. "It is an amusing incident, but will he be able to bear the hardships he must encounter if he goes on with us?"

"No trouble about that," said Captain Jack. "He is an awkward, bleating calf, but he is *tough*. He can stand as much as any body."

"We may make him useful."

"Yes he can cook. Whatever got into him though, to follow us, I can't say. And to think of him striking me back! Come down here, you monkey!"

"Won't you lick me, then?"

"Not this time."

The boy who placed implicit confidence in the word of the hunter, quitted his perch and slowly descended the tree.

CHAPTER III.

THE MARCH.

THE forces of Washington lay at this time upon Wills' Creek, now the Cumberland. They numbered one hundred and sixty men. Before them lay a dreary wilderness, bearing the somber name of the Shades of Death. On the 9th of May they were at a place called Little Meadows, twenty miles from the Cumberland.

The march of the small detachment under Washington was directed to this spot. On the way, Captain Jack dispatched a messenger to arouse his men and bring them to the rendezvous at Great Meadows.

The day after they left the river, Indian Slayer came to the major with a countenance expressing much concern.

"We are in danger, sir," he said.

"How so," asked the young leader, in an eager tone.

Indian Slayer exhibited a small black cross, carved in a curious manner.

"What is that?" demanded Washington.

"I picked it up on the path just now. You may ask

what it means. It means that Indians have passed over this ground within the hour. If you ask me still further how I know this, I reply that the tracks by the side of this were fresh. If you say that a friendly Indian may have dropped it, I reply that none but an Indian who has been under the influence of a cunning priest of the Canadas would cut out such a thing as *that*."

Washington bowed in token of his entire assent. The experience of the guide was not for him to dispute, if he had been so inclined.

"Can you judge how many had passed the spot?" he said.

"Forty, at least."

"Have you any idea who they were?"

"I have, sir; when Christopher and I met the Vulture in the morning this cross hung at his breast. The Vulture is our enemy to the death; he is mine at least, and it will go hard if I do not come out best in the encounter."

"Was all the party who have passed us Indians, or were they part French?"

"All Indians, sir, and Shawnees. There is a manifest difference in the manner of making moccasins among the tribes, and this is a Shawnee footprint I have seen. What shall we do?"

"Do you think they will attack us?"

That depends upon whether they consider themselves strong enough. Here we are six determined men, well armed, and a match for any twenty red-skins that ever walked the earth. You see I don't count tow-head at all, though if he was cornered he would make the fur fly some. I've always noticed that a coward will try to escape when there is a half chance for getting away; but fix him so that he *can't* run, and he will fight like the very devil. A coward is the worst kind of a man in such a case."

"You are right," said Washington, with a slight smile; "I hope my young friend will not be called upon to exert himself in any such way. He is a capital cook, as I am ready to testify, after the way in which he handled the frying pan in preparing breakfast. How do you propose to elude these Indians?"

"I should not do any thing of the kind. If we keep on

our course and dodge the thickets, I doubt if they will dare attack us. We must keep our rifles ready, however."

Even as he spoke a rifle cracked, and Josh, clapping his hands on that part which was described by the hunter as the "cellar-kitchen" of his "leggins," bounded into the air with a perfect howl of agony.

"Oh, I'm hit, I'm hit!" he shouted. "Dod rot that Injin; shoot him, Jack, shoot him, for I'm dead as a split herring."

"Get up, you young ape," cried the guide, pricking the youngster with the point of his knife. "You ain't hurt."

"I am," thundered the irate youngster; "I'm hit right under there," touching the injured part.

"It was a chip that hit him," said Gist. "Let's look after this fellow, Jack; there's only one."

The party, with true hunter's instinct, had covered their bodies from another shot by the nearest bush or tree. Gist and the Indian Slayer stole off to the right and left, and attempted to capture the outlying savage, who had fired at them. But the fellow retreated immediately after the shot; they found the nest warm, but the bird flown.

"Look to your arms," said Captain Jack, as he returned. "We shall have them all about us in a few minutes. Gist and I will go in front and beat the bushes; you will come slowly on, keeping out of the beaten path. As for you, Josh, when you are done howling, take your gun and come along; or if you like that position best, why stay there; I don't mind."

With these words, he dashed off upon the trail and pressed on into the bushes. Here the two scouts arranged their signals. The Indians were on the alert; the whites could hear shrill calls on every hand, and knew their enemies were closing in upon them, and that a desperate struggle might be near.

Crawling like a snake, with rifle ready for instant action, the bold hunter caught sight of the crouching form of an Indian, raising his rifle to fire. Thought was not quicker than the aim of Captain Jack, and the stream of mingled flame and smoke burst from the muzzle of the deadly piece, just as the Indian pressed the trigger. An Indian is rarely a good marksman, and the bullet whistled wide of the mark, lodging

in a tree some distance to the right of the hunter ; but *his* bullet found its mark ; it pierced the brown breast, and with a shriek of mortal agony which echoed far and wide among the hills, the warrior threw up his arms and fell a corpse upon the sod.

"One more!" said the avenger, as he coolly commenced reloading his rifle. This done, he hurried to the spot, and looked down upon his prostrate foe. He was a brawny fellow, in the prime of life, bearing the feathered plume of a Shawnee chief. Glancing down at the leggings of the fallen man, the dark brow of the hunter contracted, and he spat upon the upturned face. The leggings were fringed with long hair, which had grown upon the head of a woman.

"He deserved his death," muttered the implacable Indian-hater, as he bounded away into the forest. The death-cry of the chief had called together other members of the band, and before he had gone a hundred yards, the scalp-cry was raised above the dead body. Hearing Gist signal to return, he went cautiously back upon the trail, and found the other lying behind a log.

"Dewn!" he whispered.

The hunter fell as if shot, and not a moment too soon, for a rifle-shot raised the hair upon his head, going through and through the coon-skin cap he wore.

"Look out!" whispered Gist. "It is the Vulture. No one knows better than he how to shoot."

The other set his teeth hard, as he peered anxiously out toward the spot where the smoke of the rifle was rising. Then, as if impelled by a sudden impulse, he bounded over the log, and flung himself upon the prostrate form of the Vulture, who, anticipating no such movement, was taken entirely by surprise. Confident in his superior strength, the chief rolled over on his back, and flung his arms about the white man. But, the hunter, though not so tall as the Indian by half a head, made up in muscle what he lacked in size, and grappled with the Indian in as powerful a grasp as his own. But before either could strike a stroke, Gist was in the copse, holding a knife to the throat of the Indian.

"Dare to *whisper*, even," he cried, in the Shawnee dialect, "and I will cut your throat from ear to ear."

"Let up," said Wah-ta-ha. "Me walk woods."

"Shall we kill him?" said Captain Jack.

"Where is the daughter of the White Hunter?" demanded the Indian, in a mocking tone. "Does he ever wish to see her face again? It was a beautiful child. Her hair was like sunshine, and her voice like the music of running waters. Does the father wish to lose her forever? Let him kill Wah-ta-ha, and it is done. He will never see her face."

"Listen, Wah-ta-ha," said the agonized father. "Answer me one question. Does the child live?"

"She lives."

"Where is she?"

"Find her."

"I will kill you if you do not answer."

"The Vulture is no fool. You dare not kill him."

"Give me your belt," said the hunter, with a groan. "We must bind him and take him to Washington. He will serve as a safeguard for the rest."

A stick about three feet long was passed behind the back of the savage, and to this his arms were firmly bound. They had hardly gone a hundred rods, when they met the party of Washington, who started in surprise and joy when they saw whom they had as a prisoner. The moment the Indian saw Washington, he demanded something, speaking the Shawnee tongue.

"What does he say?"

"He asks you to set him at liberty, or shoot him through the head. One great chief can not bear to see another in bondage."

"Ask him if a great chief lies in wait in the path of a friend, and tries to take his life with powder and ball. It is hard to throw dust in the eyes of the English."

"Wah-ta-ha is a great chief," replied the Indian, with a look of lofty pride. "He does not hide like a snake in the grass. When the young chief rested by the riverside, he warned him that the way was long, and that knives and hatchets would grow upon the trail. What could the chief do more? The Vulture is not a friend of the English."

"Who fired that shot?" said Washington, in a low tone, addressed to the Indian-slayer.

"I did."

"What did you fire at?"

Captain Jack lifted his hand for silence. From the woods in front rose the strange, weird, wailing cry which the Indians raise over one of their party who is slain. Wah-ta-ha started and eagerly crept to his head, for he knew the sound too well.

"I hear it," said Washington. "What is it? It is not the war-cry."

"No," replied the hunter. "It is the death-cry of a Shawnee. I shot him."

"Then it is war to the knife."

"Yes."

The Indian listened to the cry for some moments. When he spoke again, there was no trace of anger in his voice.

"One of my young men is dead," he said. "No matter. He will go to the happy hunting-grounds of his fathers before us. Let him pass. What will my brother do with me?"

"Why did you waylay us?"

"We are the children of Onontio,"* replied the sagamore. "We can not be the children of more than one father. Onontio has told us to take up the hatchet against the English. We have done so, because we love our father Onontio. The gray-head of the Iroquois, Captain Joncaire, has told us to do this, and we love him so well that we do as he says."

"What reason can you give us why we should not kill you upon the spot?"

"It is not the custom of the English to kill their prisoners," replied the wary chief.

"You are not my prisoner. You were taken by the Indian-Slayer. Do you not know that he spares none?"

"The White Hunter dares not lay a finger upon me. A hair of my head will not fall to the ground by his hand."

Washington looked at Captain Jack.

"It is so," he said. "The fate of my daughter is in his hands."

"Does he know where she is, then?"

"Yes, but he will not tell. But, there is no time to waste. The lives of every man hang upon his. I give you my

* Indian name for the Governor of Canada.

prisoner. If he resists or tries to escape, run him through the body. Or, stay—let me talk to him."

He planted himself in front of the savage.

"We are going on," he said, "and Gist will walk by your side. Call aloud to your chiefs and make them hear you. We want a talk."

The chief uttered a series of shrill cries, which brought some of the outlying band to the edge of the wood.

"Tell all to keep back except the chiefs," said Captain Jack.

The Vulture scowled upon him, but obeyed. In a short time, four men came out of the woods, and understanding the motions of their chief, came forward fearlessly, and spoke to the Vulture in the Indian tongue, which Indian-Slayer understood.

"Why is this?" demanded the foremost. "Has the Vulture lost his cunning? Why is it that we see bonds upon his arms?"

"The claws of the Vulture are cut," replied his captor. "His wings are clipped. He will fly no more."

The chiefs regarded him steadily, and the Vulture spoke hurriedly to his subordinates. But the hunter stopped him in the midst of his speech.

"See!" said he, placing his knife-point at the breast of the chief. "Here is the knife and here lies the heart of the Vulture. We will pass on our way through the forest. If we go safely, all will be well; but if a rifle speaks, or a stick breaks, the knife will go home. It will not be the hand of the White Hunter that kills the Vulture of the Shawnees. It will be the Shawnees themselves."

The chiefs bowed, to intimate that they understood. The chief was the hostage for the safety of the party.

"Go," said the Vulture, "and let the Great Spirit put it to your hearts to do what is right. Here are many scalps, which would look well in the lodges of Shawnee braves. I am but one. If the Shawnees can spare me, let the braves do their best, and shed the blood of those who will shed mine. I am not very old, but men follow me to battle who have been years upon the trail. But my scalps count more than theirs. If I die, speak to the French fathers, and say

that the Vulture died like a man, for the sake of Father Onontio. Go, my children, and do as the Great Spirit puts it into your hearts."

The chiefs drew their blankets over their heads, in token of sorrow, and with sad faces, paced slowly away. The chief who was left looked after them until they disappeared in the forest. Then, drawing himself up proudly, he waited, confident that all would be according to the Great Spirit's will.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VULTURE USES HIS PINIONS AGAIN.

MOURNFUL cries echoed through the forest, and receded, telling that the Indians, obeying the words of the chiefs, were slowly and reluctantly drawing off from the trail, sooner than put the life of their famous chief in peril. He heard the sounds with bowed head, and an expression of pain upon his face. The proud chief was nearly broken-hearted. He had been taken by his worst enemy; outwitted in a moment when his toils were closing like the coils of a serpent and his enemy already felt the pressure.

The party went on in this order: First came the redoubtable hunter, with his trusty rifle in his hands, ready for instant action. Next came the Vulture, bound as before. Behind him came Gist, holding his knife ready to spring upon the chief and dispatch him, if any alarm could be heard from the band, who were doubtless lurking in the thickets on every side. Next came Washington, Van Braane, Josh, the two woodmen, each with his rifle on a trail, following in Indian file.

Their course lay through a country broken by mountain ridges, running in all directions—a country almost impassable to one not knowing the route; but the hunter and Gist knew every foot of ground, and had traversed it dozens of times.

When night came, they had crossed the river known as

Castlemans, and camped upon the western slope of the mountains, near Elk Lick. It was a wild and romantic spot which they chose for a camp. Upon the wooded bank of the creek rose the slope of the mountain, tier on tier. The place they had chosen was a bare, green spot upon the mountainside, ending abruptly in a precipice, dropping for more than thirty feet into the grassy meadow below. No enemy could approach from that side, and upon the other the ascent was so steep as to render approach very difficult. The military capacity of Washington was indicated thus early in his career, and a discreet foe would have hesitated long before assailing the position. They made their arrangements for the night, and then lay down to rest, leaving the two hunters, who resolutely refused to sleep, to guard the prisoner, who had lain down, bound as he was, and at once fell into a sleep. Captain Jack sat down at the root of a single tree which grew in the midst of the open space, laid his rifle against his knees, and waited for what might come.

The night passed slowly. The recumbent figures at his feet did not stir, and he fell into a sort of doze. The bound Indian about the hour of midnight stirred and raised his head from the earth as the cry of a loon came up from the stream below, answered from time to time by like cries farther down the stream. The savage simply erected his head for a moment and then allowed it to sink again to the earth, not showing that he noticed them again for hours.

About two in the morning, when the senses of all men are locked in slumber, the dark form of an Indian rose above the edge of the precipice and looked in upon the sleeping camp. The tree against which the single watcher sat was between him and the spy, whose movements were cautious as those of a cat. The hunter, in taking his position to watch the camp, had never dreamed that the Indians would come up the almost perpendicular face of the rock. But several low spruces, which grew upon the mountainside, had furnished a ladder by which to make the ascent to a small ledge, from which the top was easily reached.

Once at the top of the ascent, the spy fell prostrate and crawled like a serpent toward the bound chief. He had stripped himself to the breech cloth, and was armed with a knife.

Keeping the tree still between him and the watchful hunter, whom he feared more than any other man on earth, the Indian reached the side of his chief. Stooping over the body, he made two or three quick passes with the knife, and was rising, when he found himself in the iron grasp of the hunter.

Not a word was spoken on either side as the two men joined in a deadly grapple. The Indian had dropped his knife, so that it was entirely a question of manhood between the two. Such a combat could not last long. The Indian, though lithe and active, was as a child in the hands of the hunter. For a time he eluded the grasp, stripped of his clothing as he was. But closing again, Captain Jack wreathed his muscular arms about his body, lifted him from the ground, and sent him crashing down through the tree-tops to the bed of the creek, thirty feet below! This done, he turned to face a new foe, the Vulture! His bonds had been cut by the spy before the hunter seized him, and he had been strengthening his lithe limbs and getting back circulation in his long arms, where the cords had stopped the flow of blood.

They did not waste words in fruitless recriminations, but seized each other by the shoulder and the wrist. By this time the camp was roused, and every man ran to his arms. The first sight which greeted the gaze of Washington was the Indian-Slayer struggling upon the bank of the precipice with the savage, in the full light of the rising moon. So rapid were the movements of the struggling men, that it was impossible to aid the white man or to fire. The desperate chief, knowing that he could not break away the iron grasp of the Indian-Slayer, was struggling backward, with all the power of his muscular frame, designing to drag the other down the steep face of the rock. His own record was such that he had little to hope for if he remained a prisoner in the hands of the whites, and he prepared to die like a brave warrior, if need be.

It was a desperate struggle. Neither had an inch the advantage in point of strength, and the superior training of the hunter only gave him the odds. In spite of that, when the party sprang to their arms, the two men were tottering up on the very brink of the gulf down which the savage had that moment been hurled.

"Can't we help?" cried Gist. "My God, that devil will destroy them both."

The struggle continued. The Indian-Slayer dragged his enemy a little away from the precipice, and seemed safe. But by a superhuman effort, the Indian regained the lost ground. A moment more, and they went down into the darkness, locked in that fearful embrace.

"Torches!" cried Washington, springing to the fire. Each man provided himself with a firebrand and hurried down to the bed of the creek. A few moments' search showed them the Indian-Slayer lying bloody and senseless at the water edge. While Washington and Josh, the latter blubbering like a baby, raised the prostrate hunter, and bathed his bruised and bleeding forehead in the water of the running stream, Gist raged like a lion up and down in search of the Vulture. But the wily savage had not even waited to scalp his prostrate foe, who, in falling, had struck his head against a projecting fragment of rock. The shrill calls which had been heard before were redoubled in violence and soon assumed a cheerful sound. And in about half an hour the forest was alive with yells of joy, as it became known to the band that the chief had indeed escaped. The white men looked in vain for the young warrior who had been hurled from the cliff at the beginning of the fray. The tree tops had broken his fall and enabled him to escape, by the aid of his chief's arm.

The elastic constitution of the hunter soon enabled him to recover from the stunning effect of the blow he had received from the savage, and he rose to his feet. When he understood that the Vulture had escaped, his anger knew no bounds. He vowed to follow him, when he had done service for Washington, and make him account for his lost child.

Gist borrowed a sash from the major, and bound up the bleeding brow of his friend, using a weed now well known as possessing rare medicinal properties. The party then returned to the top of the hill and sat down in consultation.

"Shall we shift our quarters?" said Washington. "What is your opinion, captain?"

"Such as it is you are welcome to it. After to-night I shall have so little conceit that I should say my friend Josh would

give you better counsel than the man who was fool enough to let the Vulture escape. And yet it wasn't my fault so much. Who would have thought the devil would come climbing up that cliff? I was looking the other way, and never saw him until he was stooping over the chief. He went down the cliff faster than he came up. Not much credit in that either, for I went down quite as fast and got hurt worse than he. Josh! if you don't quit gawping at me and turn your platter-face another way, I will throw a stone at you.

"We are waiting for your opinion, captain."

"Oh! I beg pardon. My opinion is that you will do quite as well to stay where you are. The Indians are thick in the woods and we have lost our passport. The Vulture will be savage for blood, and will make us rue the hour we put him into bonds."

"Your advice, then—"

"Is to stay here until morning, and send one of us to the camp at Little Meadows and bring up the rangers to your help. The boys will come up in three hours. It is only a little over twelve miles."

"But what shall we do in the mean time?"

"This rock is a fortress. All the French and Indians in America could not drive you out. Take my advice. Here are loose stones lying about. Build up a breastwork upon this side toward the woods, and you are safe. That is my opinion. But, as I said before, I am ready to bow to the superior knowledge of Josh, if you hear his opinion."

"Mr. Gist," said Washington, turning to the trader, "your opinion will be of service."

"I agree perfectly with the captain in this matter. He should know better than I, but it strikes me his plan is the best that could be adopted. It is now two o'clock or more. One of us, provided there is no interruption, could run into Little Meadows in two hours. It won't take the Virginians more than half an hour to get ready to come down here, and then three hours will bring them in."

Washington glanced round the little circle, and read approval of the plan in every eye.

"The question now is, who shall go?"

"Let Josh try it," said the immovable hunter.

"You git out," was the reply.

"He can be spared best."

"I don't want to be spared. How you goin' to git along 'thout me? I shan't go down there. I don't know the way."

"There is fresh meat at the Meadows. Smell your way there."

"I can't go," cried Josh, in the greatest possible terror. I won't go. I'm sick, I'm *awful* sick. You don't know what pains I got now. Don't make a feller go when he's so sick," sobbed the boy, almost in tears.

"Enough of this," said Washington. "Be quiet, boy! Who is to go?"

The Indian-Slayer rose and began to button his belt about him. But a generous rivalry rose between him and Gist. The trader was determined that his friend should not brave the danger of the forest alone. But he was persuaded by the reasoning of the scout.

"If I am laid by the heels, the major can't get on without your help. There is as much danger, yes, and more too, staying, than going down to the Meadows. You must not stir. Take care of that blubbering boy with such awful pains about him, and bring him safe to Little Meadows. He will make a first-rate cook for the boys when they come down from the Juniata. When you hear the night-hawk cry twice and an owl-hoot thrice against the western ridge, you may know that I have made my way to the river. If you hear the owl first, I will be in danger."

The daring man lowered himself over the face of the cliff and stepped into the shadow of the trees. They listened in breathless anxiety for half an hour and no new sound reached their ears out of the stillness of the forest. Satisfied that the Indian-Slayer would do all for the best, they set to work building the barricade. While still at the work, they heard the cry of the hawk from the western ridge, followed by three whoops of the horned owl.

"He is safe," said Washington.

There was silence for a few minutes, and then the signal was repeated, *reversed*. The signal of danger!

"Can that be the hunter?" said Washington. "He should crossed the river before now."

"It came from the other side," replied Gist, in an angry tone. "I wonder what snag he has fouled now. There he goes again."

The signal was repeated with startling vehemence, but further away, and then ceased altogether. With a sigh, Christopher Gist turned back to the barricade, and went to work like a man. Before morning a breastwork better than that which covered our fathers at Bunker Hill ran round the crest of the hill upon three sides.

"Oh for provisions," said Washington, "and I would defy the Indians. It is a perfect beauty of a place. Now then, my brave Virginians, come as soon as you may."

"I hope Jack is not taken," said Gist, looking on his work with satisfaction alloyed by the danger of his friend. "The brave fellow will do any thing for his friends. I have known that man for twenty years, sir, and until his wife was murdered, there never was a man so full of the milk of human kindness. It crops out of him now, in his intercourse with his fellow-men and with Josh. But over all, is an intense hatred of the race who have robbed him of a wife and child. For ten years, he has not heard a word of that child until the chief spoke of it yesterday."

"Do you think she is a prisoner yet?"

"Yes. Since the chief spoke, I have suspected him of being the man who murdered his wife and stole the child."

"It may be so. Here, sir," addressing Josh. "If you have so far recovered from pain as to be able to do it, you may cook some of that venison for breakfast."

Josh rose nimbly, rekindled the fire which had burned low during the work of the morning, and proceeded to broil some venison-steak, cut from a haunch which was carried on the pack-horse since the day before. The boy had made cooking a study, and when he placed the corn-bread and venison before the hungry men, they were cooked to a charm. When breakfast was over and the table cleared away, which clearing consisted in throwing the pieces of bark which had been used as plates over the cliff, the party looked to their arms and out into the woods for the Indians.

From the height upon which the barricade was placed, they had a pretty good view of several miles of country, but

as it was thickly wooded, down to the very edges of the creeks and rivers, an army might have been concealed beneath the branches for all they knew to the contrary.

In the midst of the woods, a hundred rods away, rose one of the huge boulders which we see so often in the mountains of Pennsylvania and all other States through which the Alleghanys run, so high that a ragged brown point appeared above the trees. As Washington and Gist stood together behind the barricade, a solitary figure appeared upon this strange perch, and stood with folded arms, looking down into their camp. A single glance convinced them that it was the Vulture. His attitude was noble and commanding, as he stood statue-like, a monarch in his native woods.

"If that boulder were a little nearer," said Gist, upon whom the grandeur of the scene was entirely lost, "yonder painted hound would have a fall from his perch. A loping, scalping, murdering devil that he is. Now he has gone up there to spy out our weak points, and he can do it as safely as if there was no such a thing as a rifle in the forest."

The days of Minie, Sharp, and Spencer had not yet come. Christopher Gist, who would have considered it a fair achievement to hit an Indian at a hundred and fifty yards, would not have dreamed that a gun could be made which would, in skillful hands, be certain death at a thousand.

The Vulture occupied his elevated perch until he had made out all he desired in regard to the camp, and then suddenly disappeared from view.

"He will know that the Indian-Slayer is gone," said Washington. "Do you think he will attack us?"

"I don't know. He is a bold fellow, and the fact that the Indian-Slayer—(Wild Hunter, or any of the strange names they give to Jack)—is out of the way, will be one thing in favor of attack. But again, an Indian dislikes to try a fortified position."

"Ha!" cried Washington. "Whom have we here?"

Two men had parted the bushes and were coming resolutely up the hill. One was the Vulture. The other was a white man, with a white flag flung across his arm.

CHAPTER V.

THE INTERVIEW.

The two advanced fearlessly until halted by the summons of Gist, when the white man called out for a parley under the flag. He was a light, active-looking fellow, with a handsome face, rendered rather disagreeable by a perpetual sneer ; he was dressed in a plain forest costume, with the exception of a handsome belt about his waist, in which hung suspended the triangular rapier worn by the French at this period. Washington intimated that he might advance, which he did with the utmost coolness.

" You know the scoundrel," whispered Gist.

" Yes ; I should not be likely to forget Jean La Force in a hurry."

" *Bon jour, monsieur,*" said the volatile Frenchman, leaping lightly over the barricade, followed in a more sedate manner by his companion. " I am truly charmed to see you ; I have not had that supreme pleasure since you and your honored and brave companion paid us a little visit at Venango. I am truly charmed to meet you once more."

Jean La Force was one of those powerful characters whom the French sent over to uphold their tottering power in America. Like La Salle, Hennepin and others of that stamp he had been educated at the College of the Jesuits ; but declining to follow their profession, he undertook the duty of Indian-agent. In connection with the gray-haired and wily Joncaire, he had met Washington and his party at Venango and threw so many obstacles in his way both in going and returning, that only the wonderful Providence that had watched over him through life saved him from finding a grave in the wilderness. But though Washington knew that La Force was at the bottom of all his troubles, he could not for his life fasten any thing upon him, and returned to Cumberland with a high opinion of him, as a dangerous and wily adversary.

What had brought him into this wilderness? He was here to explain in person.

"You will be very much surprised to see me here, major," said he; "but Indian-agents lead a wandering life. I had something to say to my friend Wah-ta-ha, and hearing that he had come down this way from the Juniata, I followed him on the trail. Somebody has been making the chief very angry; I am afraid that there is very little chance for you if you kill any more of his men."

"Ah!"

"You will understand these things my dear friend," said the agent, in a tone of affectionate remonstrance. "You have had to do with Indians, and you know what they are when roused. Some one killed a chief yesterday, and the band are raging. Do you see the man who killed him, chief?"

"No," replied the Indian. "He is gone."

"Perhaps you would not object, major, to tell us *where* he has gone? So great is the anger of the Indians against this man, who is called the Wild Hunter, that they are ready to let all the rest go."

"It is impossible; the man is gone. Is this what you have come to speak to us about?"

"Yes; certainly."

"Then you have lost your labor. If the captain were here, for the man you seek holds a commission under the governor of this province, we should not think of giving him up; but as he is not here the whole question falls to the ground."

"There is something more to say, my friend. I have to tell you that there is a very large band of Indians in the woods, and that they are bound to have you out of this. As they can not speak English, and I am able to do it in my broken way, I ask you to yield yourselves prisoners to this chief. I give you my word of honor as a Frenchman and a gentleman, that you shall not be harmed, and taken to fort Du Quesne as prisoners of war. Resistance would be utter madness."

"Pardon me, my dear sir, if I do not see the matter in exactly that light. Look about you, and see what we have been doing since last night. Here is an excellent barricade, and here are six men armed with rifles, which they all know

how to use. Seriously, now, Monsieur La Force, have you the most remote idea that you can force us out of this position? I think not."

La Force looked about him with a sneer deepening on his lips.

"At least, if they could not force you out, have you provisions to stand a siege? Mind, I do not for a moment doubt but that they can take the place when they choose. I warn you, as a friend, that you can do nothing against them. The Shawnees, when angry, are devils upon earth; I hope you will not arouse them."

"There, there, La Force," said Gist, speaking for the first time, "we are not children, nor is this the first time we have been upon the trail. As for the Shawnees, I flatter myself that they know me quite as well as I know *you*. I have felt the claws of the Vulture," he added, in the Shawnee dialect, "and they are very dull. They were cut the last sun."

"Ne-gar-mish-a-shee!"* cried the Indian, in an angry tone. "The pale face is a dog! He talk, talk, tongue go like wind. Let him give up the muskets, the powder and the ball, and go as a captive to Du Quesne, or my braves shall come and take the scalps from off your heads, and let them hang in our lodges on the river."

"Our scalps are our own as yet, and when you want them, come and take them. Why should we fear the Shawnees? They shout in the woods like boys who have been kept long in the lodge. They *are* boys. They fall from the cliffs like ripe fruit from the trees in autumn."

The Indian shook his brown right-hand angrily on high, and leaped at the speaker, but the young Frenchman anticipated his purpose, and threw his arms about the waist of the giant.

"Hold, chief! Gist, stand back! Shawnee, would you forget your safeguard?"

The momentary burst of passion over, the Indian quietly released his body from the grasp of the Frenchman, and turned his back upon the others. Gist had thrown his rifle hastily to his shoulder upon the first rush of his enemy, whose fate hung in the balance. If he had made another

* I feel very angry.

step, it would have been his last upon earth. At a sign from Washington, Gist allowed the butt of the piece to drop to the earth, while the major addressed the Frenchman.

"It is useless to attempt to make this interview longer, Monsieur La Force. If any good could possible come from it, I should be glad to hear it; but as it is, I think you would do well to take your friend away at once."

"Then you refuse to yield?"

"Entirely."

"You will be attacked."

"We have prepared."

"Not a man of you will be spared if you are taken."

"It is not our intention to be taken."

The Frenchman, seeing the uselessness of talk, threw his flag again over his arm, signed to the Indian, and both together plunged into the woods.

About ten in the day the Indians began to show symptoms of a design to attack the stronghold. Josh saw all these preparations with badly concealed dismay. He wished himself back in the cabin at the mountain foot, and in his inmost soul cursed the day when he had left that spot to follow the vagrant steps of his master. Besides, in his opinion, they had chosen the simplest kind of a place for defense. In his idea, no place was perfect for defense unless it had *holes to hide in*, and this place was utterly desolate in this regard.

Josh came to Washington with a mournful face. "I've got them pains ag'in, major," he said, "and if you'll only let me lay down under this wall, I guess I'd git over it putty soon, and then I'm a-goin' to pitch into 'em Injins. I be, by gravy! Oh, Lord!"

The sharp whistle of a bullet stopped his speech, and he fell to the ground and crawled rapidly under the wall. The attack had commenced, and it was evident that the movements of the savages were directed by one not a stranger to military movements. The band had broken into four detachments. The first lay in front, and kept up a warm fire from the cover of the bushes. The second passed above, and came down the creek behind the rocks and trees. The third came up from below, while a fourth body forded the stream and gained the heights in the rear of the hills, where they

were on a level with the crest upon which the defenses stood. By this arrangement the little band of defenders was sorely bewildered, and knew not what to do. Upon second thought, seeing that the attack would come from the front, Washington sent one man to each side, and kept the rest under his command in front. Once in a while they would catch a glimpse of a dusky body as they crawled nearer and nearer, but he gave the men orders not to fire until he gave the word to do so. When the approaching party were within easy range, a sharp fire was commenced from the breastwork, which soon placed several of the savages *hors de combat*, and forced them to retreat hastily to the cover of the thick woods. To reach the breastwork they must cross fifty yards of ground bare of every tree or shrub, and, like all Indians, they hesitated about such a dangerous act.

While the curses of La Force, who was endeavoring to incite the savages to charge, were yet sounding in the woods below, new actors appeared upon the scene. Wading in the creek, and making the old woods ring with their yells of rage and defiance, came the rangers of Washington, the Virginians who afterwards did such gallant service upon the fatal field of Braddock. At the first sound of that rousing English cheer the savages retreated, and when the rangers scoured the woods an hour after, not a single Indian could be found. Washington greeted warmly the young captain who led the rangers to his relief. According to his report, they had marched soon after the arrival of the hunter, who had been driven out of his course by outlying scouts after he had crossed the river, which caused him to give the signal of danger. The Indian-Slayer took the major aside as soon as the detachment was ready to march. "Since you say La Force is in the woods, sir, you will need to send scouts out. Perhaps it would be as well to send me as any."

"Yes, but can I spare you?"

"I don't think it will make any difference," replied the hunter. "If you will let me take out James Carroll of the rangers, the sergeant, you know, I think we can do as good service on the scout as any men I know. I'd like to take Chris if I could, but I don't think you could spare us both, if you are to meet any Indians. None of the boys can talk the lingo."

"Very well," said Washington. "When you are ready, come to me for your orders."

"Then I will take them now."

"You will follow on the trail of this party who have troubled us so on the march. Find out where they are going, and what La Force is doing with them. In short, find out all you can in the space of a week, and return. You will find us at or near Great Meadows. Where is Sergeant Carroll?"

"Here, major," said a manly voice at his side. Washington turned quickly, and extended his hand to a fine, tall young fellow, in the dress of a sergeant in the rangers.

"And so, sergeant, you mean to try the perils of the wilderness under the tuition of the Indian-Slayer?"

"I could not learn in a better school, Major Washington."

"You are right," said Washington; "but you must be careful, for I cannot afford to lose my drill-sergeant."

With these words they separated, and Washington set about preparing for his march. The rangers were not the men to dally long upon the trail, and in less than half an hour their green coats might have been seen gliding through the woods, with skirmishers thrown out in front and flank, to drive off any lurking savages who might follow the trail of the column. But the savages had no intention of troubling a well-appointed force, and kept well out of sight, so much so that they did not notice that the Indian-Slayer and Sergeant Carroll had detached themselves from the main column and hid in the bushes. As soon as the column was gone, gathering cries sounded through the woods, and the Indians began to gather in the deserted camp. When all were in and gathered in council, the two men came out of their concealment, and looked in upon the new camp. Lying in their shelter, covered by the bushes, they were all at once startled by a quick light step, and knew that some one was passing in the direction of the camp. Parting the bushes with one hand, Sergeant Carroll looked out upon the trail, and was greeted by a sight which he had never looked to see in the forest.

A young girl, in the dress of the women of the Shawnee nation, was walking quickly down the path. The face, as seen in profile, had not the sharp outline characteristic of the

Indian woman, nor was it so dark. . Her dress was that of an Indian, as we said, adorned with beads in every part, which flashed and glittered when the sun struck it. A short tunic, reaching to the knee, made of tanned buckskin, pliable and soft as chamois, formed the main portion of her attire. The limbs were covered with leggings of the same material as the tunic, and the feet were cased in dainty moccasins. A plumed head-dress covered her dark hair, which had a lustre about it rarely seen in an Indian, and was suffered to fall, unconfined, half-way to her feet, from under the dainty head-dress. A belt encircled her waist, bearing a beautiful dagger, the gift of some Frenchman, and a light hatchet. She also carried, thrown across her arm, a small but beautifully made carbine. Sergeant Carroll drew his breath hard, and looked after her as she bounded lightly over the stones of the barricade, and stood in the presence of the council. All rose simultaneously, and La Force, who was still with the party, advanced to receive her with the courtly grace which is part of the education of a Frenchman. The spies noted that she was received as a dignitary, and led to a seat in the council.

"A woman on the war-path!" muttered the Indian-Slayer
"What will come next?"

CHAPTER VI.

ATTA-CARA.

THE woman who had made her way into the camp of the Shawnees, looked about her with a dignified air at the puzzled faces of the band. Evidently, they did not like to see her here, but accepted it as her privilege. The dark eyes, in their round, rested upon the malignant face of the Vulture.

"Speak!" she said. "Speak, I say, Wah-ta-ha. What are the men of the Shawnees doing so far from the path upon which they should hunt? Why are they armed as if for battle? Why is the paint so thick upon the face and breast of the Vulture? Has the voice of Atta-Cara ceased

to be heard? Has she no longer power in the lodges of the Shawnees? Let the chief speak."

"Wah-ta-ha is not a woman," was the half-angry reply of the chief. "He has heard the words of the Shawnee prophetess. She has spoken to the braves at the council fire, and she would make them women, like the Delawares of the Lakes, or the sons of Father Unas. But the Vulture is a warrior; he loves to go out upon the war-path, and strike the enemies of the tribe. He will *not* be sent back like a child, because a woman speaks."

A quick, angry flash rose to the brown cheek of Atta-Cara, as she heard the defiance of the chief, and an indignant murmur arose among the Indians, who revered their prophetess, whom they all believed to be "Great Medicine." The wily chief at once saw his mistake.

"The Vulture has often listened to the wisdom of the prophetess, and her words are like honey on the tongue. But she does not understand this thing. The English dogs are the enemies of the Shawnees. Onontio is our brother, and we will do as he says."

"What have the French done for us, more than the English?" demanded Atta-Cara. "I have studied the stars, and talked with the spirits of the rocks and trees, and they have said that the power of the French is passing away. I see, between my eyes and the time when they must pass away forever from this land, a bloody battle, and the hosts of the red-coats are scattered. But they will rise again in new power, and the French must go away."

La Force rose with forced calmness, and spoke: "I have heard the words of Atta-Cara, and they are not good. The French have always been the friends of the Shawnees—the English their enemies. Why should the great prophetess of the Shawnees speak against those who love them so well? My hands are clean. I hold them out that you may look upon them. Who shall say that the hands of a Frenchman were ever wet with the blood of a Shawnee? I look about me, and I miss a face which was loved in the lodges of the Shawnees. It is the face of Met-a-kulla. He was a chief. Where does his body lie? He fell in the deep forest by the shot of the Wild Hunter of the Shawnee! Would the French do so?"

The murmur of the Indians was now turned against the hated English.

"La Force has a smooth tongue," said the girl, "but it is forked. A snake has a forked tongue. How did Met-a-kulla die? He lay like a snake in the path of the English, seeking scalps. He died the death, and it was just. Is Atta-Cara a fool, that she cannot read the thoughts of men?"

"The blood of the accursed race runs in the veins of Atta-Cara," cried the Vulture, shaking his brown hand on high. "I have known it, and blood will speak. It speaks to-day, when it says that the English are our friends. Atta-Cara says that she has spoken to the spirits of the rocks and trees. They were lying spirits. They are the spirits of the English. They say evil things, and have put it into the heart of Atta-Cara to speak against those who love her well."

Atta-Cara rose slowly. Until this moment she had remained sitting on the stone upon which she had placed herself when introduced into the crowd. A great and noble anger sat enthroned upon her brow. Carroll thought he had never seen anything so imposing as the attitude she assumed. Stretching out her arm toward the assembled group, she addressed them in an impassioned appeal.

"The chief has said that I have the blood of the English in my veins. He speaks true. Atta-Cara will not deny it. But she has been ten years a child of the great Shawnee nation. They have been kind to her; they have listened to her words, when the spirits of the rocks and trees have spoken to her ears. They loved her when she told them what is right, and what is wrong. They are right. They shall not go away after the words of one who only sees blood and scalps. He has said I am a woman; yes, a woman's heart beats in my breast. I do not love war. Scalps are odious in my eyes. I can not bear to see them. The sons of Father Unas live as the Great Spirit would have them live.

"But this is not it. The Shawnees are a great nation, but they can not stand up against the power of the English. They will sweep them from the face of the earth, if they rise up against them in anger. The French promise much, but they do little. What have Captain *Bareau*, or *Joncaire*, or *La Force* done for us? They have asked us to strike the

English. They have bought many scalps from you; and when our friends struck the French flag in the council house at the lodges of the Twilightees, you went against them, and took the scalps of those that had been your friends. Was this right? What is the flag of France to us? Why did not the Captain Joneaire avenge his own flag, and not sigh by the tomahawks of the Shawnees? The Shawnees are not such children that they can not see that they are only tools in the hands of La Force and Joneaire. Let us, if we must, join ourselves with any party, join the strongest.

"You hear me speak of La Force; you know how he has pursued me, and asked me to be his wife, when he knows that the Prophetess of the Shawnees can not take a husband. This is the man who has taken the lead in our nation. I have spoken."

An angry spot began to glow upon the cheeks of the Frenchman. That of which the prophetess accused him was true. The beauty of the girl had so far overcome his prejudice against the Indian blood supposed to be in her veins, that he had determined to marry her. The history of this remarkable woman was veiled in obscurity. The Vulture had brought her home when returning from a foray, in which his entire band had been cut off by the Delawares, himself alone escaping with the child. Beyond the fact that she was the child of a "Yengee" he had said nothing; and as the band who accompanied him had been destroyed on his return, no one knew the secret of her birth.

From the first, Atta-Cara was a child full of promise, and as she grew older, retaining a knowledge of her native tongue, for she was two years old when taken, and being naturally keen and active, she gained an influence in the tribe, not second to that of the head chief himself. She was cunning enough to make a pretense of being one of those favorite beings to whom are revealed some of the mysteries of the future. This, among the superstitious Indians, raised her more and more in their estimation, until, at the age of twenty she was universally recognized as great medicine, and formally invested with the title of prophetess. Her great beauty made her coveted by many of the chiefs; but, pretending that her powers would be lost by a marriage, she had

prevailed upon the Indians to let her remain unmarried until this time. Looking at her office as sacred, it is not to be wondered at that the Indians should resist any attempt to take her from them, and hence many lowering looks were cast upon La Force as her accusation fell from her lips. But he was abashed only for a moment.

This wonderful woman was brave of heart, and being allowed the greatest liberty by her tribe, she often made long journeys alone, armed and equipped as we have seen. She had accompanied the party, which started out for hunting, and left them at the joining of the waters of the Susquehanna and Juniata, for a visit to a Shawnee village situated upon the northern bank of the Juniata, promising to cross the country and join them at the hunting-grounds a short distance to the east of the place where they now were. The Vulture had taken advantage of the absence of the prophetess to attempt the destruction of the party of Washington.

It might be thought, that knowing her blood to be English, Atta-Cara would return to her own people. But the shock of her capture had utterly effaced from her mind the memory of the place from which she was taken, and she knew no kindred, no people. The Vulture, with whom she had been at enmity for the last year, refused to speak of her capture, and like Logan, she did not know that a drop of her blood flowed in the veins of a living creature. What would it avail her if she escaped from a place where she was comparatively happy, to go among those who were entire strangers? It is not to be wondered at that she enjoyed her wild sovereignty, and did not care to leave a people who loved her, for the cold charity of strangers.

The majority of the warriors, without abating a whit of their loyalty to her, were firmly bound upon following the young Frenchman upon the adventure which he had marked out for them. The Shawnees openly acknowledged the authority of the French, and Atta-Cara had never been able to win them to the English side, as she had often tried to do.

The council broke up, after agreeing to pass the night upon the slope, and the men strolled out into the woods, some of them in dangerous proximity to the place where the two spies lay prostrate under the overhanging boughs.

"What if some of the greasy heathens blunder upon us?" whispered the sergeant in the ear of his companion.

"Fight!" was the short reply, "if we must. Run if we can. We are in a dangerous place."

Stooping low, and avoiding the places where they could hear the voices of Indians, they gained a place secluded from observation and lay down to wait for the movements of the savages. They only remembered the order of Washington, to hang upon the trail of this party, and find out whether there were more Frenchmen in the neutral ground.

"Queer," said the sergeant, looking at his friend. "I can't get that girl out of my head."

"Not so very queer, either," replied the Indian-Slayer. "Neither can I."

"She is beautiful," said the sergeant.

"Is she?" said the other, in an absent tone. "I never thought of that. I don't know why it runs in my head so. Perhaps it was what they said about her having English blood in her veins. She reminded me of the fate of my lost Molly."

"Your daughter?"

"Ah, yes. What this girl is now, *she* would be, if she lives. Why did that cursed Indian speak of it, only to rack me with suspense?"

"What Indian?"

"The Vulture. He said my daughter was alive; that he knew where she was, but would not tell me. My curse upon him, I will have his blood. And yet I dare not, for he said that with him perished forever the secret of her birth. My curse upon him, I say; when I have his secret, my vengeance shall not sleep."

"What a woman that is! How nobly she stood up for the English! She is English herself, the chief said."

A pensive shade passed over the fine face of the Indian-Slayer. "You are young," said he, "and your heart is warm. I do not wonder that you are attracted toward this girl, for even in my eye she is beautiful, but that I, an old hunter and forest ranger, should find my heart go out to her, is something that I can not understand. But let that be as it may, she is in danger. The girl does not know La Force as I do. A

treacherous snake! If he has made up his mind to possess her, he will move heaven and earth to accomplish his object. Though I hate him, I will give him his due, and say that he is the most dangerous foe, next to Joncaire, with whom we have to contend on this frontier."

" You think he will follow her, then?" cried the young soldier, his eyes blazing. " Perhaps he would despise me, but he would find an enemy in me."

" Are you ready to be her champion already? Ah, you are young. I am afraid your hot blood would avail you little in an encounter of this kind. He is a cool, wary man, who would turn your own weapons against you. Old Christopher knows him, and he very nearly wound up his earthly accounts when coming up the Monongahela. But we must watch the rascal, or he will do your pet an injury. For the time, we can do no better than get rest now, for, my word for it, if things turn out as I think, we will be footsore and weary before we reach the end of our journey."

CHAPTER VII.

THROUGH THE WOODS.

The spies slept as only men can who love the free breath of the woods. They woke at early morning, and stole nearer to the camp of their enemies, who were stirring full as soon as they, and preparing for a march. While the rest partook of a simple repast, Atta-Cara went aside to a spring which burst from the side of the hill, and ran down into the creek below. Here she sat down, and taking some parched corn from a pouch at her side, ate with a keen zest. The spot she had chosen was not far from the place where the two men lay concealed—but she proceeded with her meal, utterly unconscious of their supervision, until a firm step on the hard ground above her, warned her that some one was coming. A moment after, La Force came into the secluded place she had chosen, and threw himself in an indolent attitude upon the sward at her side.

"Good day, my forest bird," was his salutation. "I hope you rested well."

"As well as I might, knowing that you were so near," replied the girl, in rather a sharp tone.

He laughed lightly. "Don't spare *my* feelings, I beg of you," he said. "I know that you have taken up an uncommon prejudice against one who would die to do you a service. Look about you, Atta, and tell me if the things you see are suited for one of your rare beauty. Listen. Be my wife, as I have asked you many times. We will leave these wild scenes for others more congenial, and forget the life among the Shawnees. You are very beautiful, my darling; your eyes are like the stars in brightness, and your voice is the very soul of music. You would be feted and followed in La Belle France, where men bow down to beauty in woman. Say, darling, will you go?"

"No," replied the girl, paying very little attention to his heroics, "I will not."

"And why?"

"Can you ask? Though the home I have with the Shawnees is a rough one, still it has been home to me for ten years, and I will not exchange it for very doubtful happiness. Your France would not suit me. I could have no heart in the shows you speak of. I have grown up as a Shawnee girl. I have only the simple training they give their women. I have no wish to change my manners now. I could not if I would. I should shame you. Would it not be better for you to cease pursuing me?"

"You ask too much," he said, rising slowly. "Wake not a sleeping wolf. There are few men upon earth who could be a warmer friend than I, none, I think, a worse enemy. I have sworn that you shall be my wife. I swear it again. By things earthly and things heavenly, by things present and to come, I swear it in your presence again. Put it in your books, and remember well what I have said to you."

"You need not think to frighten me," cried the prophetess, rising in stately scorn. "Such a thing as fear does not run in my blood."

"You do not understand me, that is the reason," said the agent. "You do not know the man you defy. Girl, what

can you do if I win over the chief, who is my friend and your enemy, to think as I do? The band are his to a man. They will do as he says, and not even your eloquence can win them to your purpose. Why not yield gracefully, since yield you must?"

"Not I. The thing you speak of is impossible. Though the chief and I are not good friends he would not see me wronged."

"You are not of his blood. The chief is all Indian, and he would not consider it a wrong to force you to be my wife, and thus get you out of his way forever. He will do it."

She turned pale, in spite of her self-possession.

"That shaft went home," said the Frenchman, in a taunting tone. "I will tell you something we have agreed upon. You are to be my wife; every thing we have done has tended toward that purpose. For this I left my friend Jumonville, and come to this place to meet the Vulture, for he sent a runner to Venango to inform me that you had joined the party. I came to him at once; you will march with us until we join the party of Jumonville, who will let his priest, Father Du Sale, perform the ceremony which shall make us one."

"You have laid out a very pretty plan, my dear sir."

"Superb, is it not?"

"Quite so. The only trouble will be that I would sooner die by your hand than be your wife."

"As for that, I do not intend to kill you. When you are my wife, you will love me fast enough. It only needs that."

"I tell you I will die first."

"I hear you," replied the Frenchman coolly; "but you are angry now; you will think better of it by-and-by."

"I shall never think better of you," replied Atta-Cara.

"I can hardly believe it; but I came to tell you that we march in half an hour; the course we must take will be rough, and I am afraid you will tire. Shall I have a litter made?"

"No."

"Then you will walk?"

"I will not go."

"You must."

"I will appeal to the band."

"Do so ; they will not hear you."

"Oh, am I alone ?" she cried. "Will no one hear me, will no one help ? I am a woman, sir ; you have boasted of the thing Frenchmen call honor. Show some of it now ; give up the power you say you have over me ; let me go back to the Nation. I ask no guide, no guard, I know the way, and do not fear to go alone ; let me go now."

"My dear girl, it is impossible to comply with your request ; it has cost me some trouble and pains to bring matters to this pass, and I can not give up now ; you will get ready to march in half an hour."

In the impulse of her sudden anger, the girl lifted her hand and struck him a blow with the open palm upon the mouth ; so sharp a blow, that the blood started from his thin lips, cut by the white teeth. In his rage his hand was lifted to return the blow, as if a man had stood before him. But the sight of her glowing face restrained him, and he staggered back against a tree, looking at her with gleaming, malevolent eyes.

"You have insulted me again," he hissed.

"You drew it on yourself. Approach me if you dare, and I will kill you."

He advanced quickly and seized her by the shoulder ; but she swung herself loose, and snatched the little hatchet from her belt. He threw up his arm to ward off a blow which she struck at him with all her force. The handle struck upon his arm and broke short in her hand, the blade flying up and cutting him slightly upon the temple. The spirit of the girl suited him, and he broke into a short laugh.

"You have spirit enough, my dear," he said. "Well, I forgive you, since I have made you angry."

The girl said no more, but walked rapidly away into the center of the camp. Meeting an Indian, she addressed him in his own language, and demanded if he was going to join La Force against her. He refused to answer, and pointed to the chief as the person to whom to apply. Several more to whom she spoke would only answer her in the same manner, and she at last spoke to the chief himself, who had been watching her in a moody manner. As she approached he folded his arms and compressed his lips sternly.

"What is this, chief?" she cried. "Have you forgotten that I am Prophetess of the Shawnees?"

"La Force is a great brave," was the ready reply of the savage. "Most women would be proud to be the wife of such a man; why should the prophetess be better than other Yengees? for she is a Yengee."

"The time was when the chief was kind to me. Why has he turned against me?"

"Why did Atta-Cara turn against the *chief*?" was the reply. "I nursed you in my bosom, for you were but a child when you came into my lodge. You grew up beautiful and became great in the tribe; then I knew I had nursed a serpent; the prophetess spoke against the very things the Vulture loved most. He loved *Onontio* and hated the *Yengees*; she loved the *Yengees* and hated *Onontio*; he was a warrior, the sound of the war cry was music in his ears, and his blood warmed when he saw scalps; but she trembled at the sound of the war-cry, and taught the warriors to bury their weapons and live like the sons of Father Unas. It is not good."

The chief wrapped his blanket about him and walked away, refusing to hear another word from her lips; but when they were ready to march, to the surprise of every one she grasped her carabine, and vowed she would shoot the first man who laid his hands upon her to force her away. Here was something upon which they had not at all counted. She stood with her back to the barricade which Washington had built, and with a blaze in her eyes which spoke of a determined will, warned them back.

The savages paused, and looked at one another in considerable dismay. Not one among them had any desire to injure their prophetess in any manner; that was farthest from their designs; but they were simply subservient to the chief in the matter; they never dreamed that she would show fight in this manner.

"A fiend fly away with her," cried La Force. "She is stopping the march. Come, come, my darling, of what use are these heroes? You can not possibly escape; you are surrounded. If you leave your present position you will be seized at once. Why not give up, and you will be treated as a lover should treat the woman he loves best?"

All this time the Indian-Slayer had been trying to keep down the rising anger of the young soldier, who was in ecstasies over the brave bearing of the girl and her harsh treatment by the Frenchman. When she struck him in the face his admiration knew no bounds, and he with difficulty restrained from uttering a shout of approbation. When she drew the gun upon them, the hunter was forced to hold him to prevent him from rushing out to take his stand at her side.

"Keep quiet, you devil!" whispered the hunter, his anger rising, "you will ruin us both if you don't take care."

"*Dam* that Frenchman!" was the reply of the soldier. "Just look at that girl!"

"You must keep quiet.

"I will, if I can; but, oh, glory! *Look* at that girl."

She stood there, calmly self-reliant, holding the weapon ready to fire. La Force made a single step toward her, and she called upon him to desist in so stern a tone that he recoiled and looked at his associates with a blank face. In the mean time, a couple of savages stole away while she watched in front. Seeing this, the wily Frenchman engaged her in debate, while his men crept nearer. He called upon her again and again to yield, but she only answered by a bold defiance.

"Say what you can, La Force; I will not yield, and if you come any nearer, one of you, I shall shoot; if you have any doubt of the accuracy of my aim, you may ask the chief. Or, if you like that better, try to come near me. I shall not hesitate about shooting *you*, be sure of that."

"You must yield," replied La Force, raising his finger. "Now."

The word was spoken with such vehemence that it startled her; then, to her great surprise and dismay a pair of dusky arms were thrown about her, pinioning her arms to her sides. She struggled desperately, and almost broke away from her captor, who had risen quietly from behind the barricade and seized her in his arms. La Force sprang forward and took her weapons from her and then ordered the man to set her at liberty. He had no sooner done so than she sprang over the barricade, and darted away into the thick woods. La Force uttered a single cry of mingled rage and dismay and bounded after her, followed by a dozen Indians, who spread out to the

right and left in the pursuit, some of them breaking through the bushes in hot haste, a few feet from the bushes in which the hunter and the young soldier lay concealed.

The forest training of Atta-Cara had been such that her frame was light and active, and for a short time she distanced her pursuer; but he was a rapid runner, and after the first hundred yards or so she knew he was gaining, and darting aside from the beaten path she threw herself prostrate under a bush and waited for him to pass. He came up, even passed her, when his eye caught the glitter of the bead ornaments she wore and he turned back. Seeing that she was discovered, the poor girl rose and ran again, but she was soon overtaken, and led back panting, supported by the strong arm of her captor, with white lines about his mouth which told how great was his anger. Her eyes were blazing too, and when she recovered her breath she stretched out her arms, and burst into a withering denunciation of the Shawnees, who quailed before it. The hunter only could understand her words, for she spoke in the Indian tongue; but the soldier could understand her impassioned gestures. Her speech was one calculated to terrify the rude spirits to whom she spoke; she told them that the glory of the Shawnees would soon lie in the dust, and that strangers would possess the land in which they dwelt.

The Indians slunk away upon the trail, with the exception of four who were appointed to guard the prophetess. Upon her giving her word not to attempt to escape, her hands were not bound, and she was suffered to proceed in her own way. It was an unuttered avowal on their part of confidence in her. They knew that she would not break her word.

They marched on in gloomy silence in the customary "Indian file," looking into every thicket through which they had to pass, and keeping well in the open country; and all the while, the sergeant and his companion followed like sleuth-hounds on the trail.

The Indian-Slayer was dissatisfied with his companion. He knew the young man to be a brave fellow, utterly reckless of danger, but one who would be guided by his heart sooner than his head. This did not suit the wary old hunter. Upon the trail, he claimed, a man had no business with any heart

at all, and he was afraid the young man would bring danger on them both.

"I wish we had never seen this girl," he said. "She will get us into trouble."

"I don't agree with you. It is worth some years of my life to have lived until this hour. I will save that girl."

"I am with you. But you must be guided by me. Danger lurks in every step we take."

The course of the band was south-westerly, evidently with a fixed purpose in view. Skirting the mountains in their course, they crossed the eastern portion of the tract of land known as Great Meadows, very near the camp of Washington, as it afterward proved, and made a camp at night in a secluded dell. All day long the untiring scouts had followed the course of the band, stopping when they stopped, stooping low when they crossed level ground, but always keeping them in view. The camp was well chosen, for La Force had a good eye to military effect, and was known and feared along the border.

The men at once set to work erecting a number of temporary cabins, as if their stay was intended to be a short one. Long poles were cut and joined at the top, in the form of the Indian wigwams, forming the framework of the dwellings. Into the vacant spaces they wove the branches of trees, and formed in a few hours a number of spacious and pleasant sylvan huts, of which the men took possession. Special care was taken with one of the huts, which was set aside for the use of the prophetess, to which La Force led her.

"Do not, I pray you, Atta, consider yourself in the light of a captive. There is nothing you can ask at my hands, except your liberty, and to forego the happy privilege of loving you, which I will not grant, believe me."

"You guard the very thing I would have asked, my liberty. I am your prisoner. Do with me as you have the power to do. But I will never marry you."

"You must not make rash vows. As a true lover, I have a right to use any means to obtain the lady of my choice. Rest thee well."

He turned away and left her, after reminding her of her

promise that she would not try to escape. As she had no wish to be alone in the wilderness, now that she was in a part of the country which she did not know, she reiterated her promise, and he left her to her rest.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE INTERVIEW.

WHEN the shades of night began to close around the sleeping camp, the young soldier, after a contest with his more wary comrade, determined to go into the village, and attempt to obtain an interview with the captive maiden. The Indian-Slayer contended that it was foolhardy in him to enter the camp at all on such an errand; but, seeing that the young man had made up his mind, he determined to aid him as far as he could. A set of signals was concerted between them, and the young man started on his perilous mission, while the hunter crept nearer to the camp and waited the result in breathless anxiety.

The young soldier had the utmost confidence in himself—too much, perhaps, for his own safety. He had left his rifle behind him, well knowing that it could be of no possible use to him. He took only his pistols and a knife. The hunter had endeavored to prevail upon him to leave his pistols as well as the rifle, but to this he would not agree.

The night was a dark one, and the only guide he had was the camp-fire shining through the trees. Pressing forward swiftly but silently, he had come quite near to the camp, when an Indian rose silently in his path, and asked him a question in the Shawnee language, which was all Greek to Carroll. They were close together, and there was nothing for it but to seize the Indian by the throat, and suppress the cry which was rising to his lips. The next moment his knife was in the heart of the warrior, while his left hand still compressed the muscular throat. It was a terrible necessity, and the soldier had done that which his profession required, speedily and

well. With a slight struggle, the Indian became a dead weight in the arms of the soldier, and he allowed him to drop gradually to the ground. His first thought was to leave him where he lay; but upon second thought he lifted the body, carried it away into the woods, and concealed it in a hollow log. After this, he returned to the spot where the encounter had taken place, and, lying prostrate, tried to make out the hut in which the maiden had been placed.

What he intended to do, he had hardly thought himself. An irrepressible longing to see Atta nearer, to know her, drove him on. He hoped that he might meet La Force, and by his death, end her persecution. Creeping with great care into the camp, he looked at the group lying around the camp-fire. There were only five; the rest were in the cabins, and these, who had been left to guard the camp, were dozing. Whatever had rendered the slain man more restless than his fellows, he had found his death by its means.

As the young man lay upon the earth, the curtain of a lodge was pulled aside, and a figure came out into the open ground. The outline was that of a woman, and must be Atta-Cara. She advanced at once to the fire, and spoke a few words to the warriors. Whatever she said, they seemed to acquiesce, and she turned away from the camp, and went out to the other side of the opening, where there was a spring.

Thirst had impelled her to this spot, and she lifted the gourd and drank deeply. While doing this, the young soldier had followed her, and was close at her elbow in the darkness.

His fear now was that she would be alarmed, and cry out. But he determined to risk that, and spoke in a low tone a few words of the French language, which he had heard her speak with La Force, and in which he had been instructed in the military school. At the first word in that tongue she took him to be La Force, and refused to open her lips. It was well that she thought so, or some unguarded expression might have betrayed him. Before he had finished his first sentence, she knew it was a stranger.

"Who is it?" she whispered, in French.

"I am an English soldier," he replied, in the same tone. "I have followed the party from the time you joined them on

the mountain. I have heard you speak for us, and know that you are a friend to the English. You are in the hands of a bad man. I will not ask if you love him."

"I do not."

"I know it. I have come to save you. Leave this camp with me, and we will make our way to the camp of Washington. No woman ever pleaded to the major in vain, and you shall have protection and safety. Will you go?"

"I fear this man--this La Force," said the girl. "I know that he has a bad, wicked heart. I do not love him. But I gave him my word that I would not try to escape to-night, and I can not go with you."

"No promise is binding which is extorted by force. Do not mind it."

"You are wrong. Faith should be kept, when once given. The man is a villain, and I hate him. But my word shall be kept, for all that."

"I think you carry it too far. But, be it as it may, I desire sincerely to do you a service. It was at some danger to myself that I came here, and I made a passage by a bloody portal. But it shall not detain me from coming again."

"Thanks. I will not forget your kindness; and if I never see you again, I will remember you always. What will you do if you come again?"

"Be in your lodge to-morrow night at this time, and wait until I come. When you hear three low taps upon your lodge from the outside, come out, and I will meet you. I dare not give any louder signal. Is it your desire, after you escape, to go back to the Shawnees?"

"What else have I to do?" asked the girl, with a mournful cadence in her voice. "My blood is English, but I do not know from whom it came. The Vulture brought me, when a little child, ten years old to the lodges of the Shawnees, and since then I have lived a not unhappy life. Why should I go back to the English? I should not have a single friend, where now I have many."

"You should have one, at least," cried the young man impetuously. "A friend who would be faithful. These Indians take a strange way of showing their regard for you."

"They are the tools of the Vulture, who thinks I have

made an ungrateful return for his kindness to me. Perhaps I have; he was kind to me when I was a child, but I could not like him. But it is dangerous for you to stay here. The camp will be aroused in a moment. I am watched all the time. You will not fail me?"

"While I have life, never!"

"Go then. Fly. Stay not a moment or you are lost. I see the men at the fires rising and coming this way. For your life go," and seeing that he lingered still, she added: "It is for my safety, too."

"Give me your hand at parting," he said. "Tell me that I have not been presumptuous in coming here."

"I shall thank and bless you for it to my dying day. There is my hand, now go."

The voice of La Force was now heard, speaking gruffly to the men at the fire, and demanding where the prophetess had gone. They told him, and his heavy step was heard approaching the spring.

"Let me stay," said the young man. "I will kill him."

"If you have any regard for my safety," cried Atta, "go while there is time."

He pressed the hand he held to his lips and stepped quickly aside. But La Force was now so near that to attempt to move when a footstep on the dry leaves would betray his presence to the enemy, was impossible. So he leaned against a tree within six feet of the spring and waited until La Force should go away. The Frenchman's usual calm was ruffled because the Indians had suffered her to go to the spring unwatched, for he knew that if so good an opportunity had been given him for escape, he would have seized it at once. His voice told his anger.

"You choose strange times for rambling."

"I choose my own times," replied Atta, testily. "I do not know that it need trouble you."

"But it does. What if you had escaped through the cursed carelessness of my guards? You might have done so if you chose."

"Monsieur has forgotten one little thing which a gentleman would have remembered. Setting aside the fact that I should not venture alone and unarmed into the woods at this hour,

I gave him my word that I would not escape. Monsieur must have the greatest regard for me, as he says, since he takes the liberty to doubt my word."

She had been so much in the society of the French that she had acquired their peculiarities of language. La Force looked disconcerted, and she repeated,

"Monsieur has taken the liberty to doubt my word?"

What could he say? He stammered some lame excuse or other in reference to having been misled by his great love for her. She only answered by a look of supreme scorn.

"You have doubted my word, sir. I had given it to you in good faith, and meant to keep it. Promises can be of no service to you, since you do not believe them. I withdraw mine, and tell you that I shall run away at the very first chance I get. Remember! I withdraw my promise, because you treat me as if no such promise had been made. You do not treat me as a Frenchman should treat the woman he has said he loves."

"You drive me mad," cried La Force, in a louder tone. "What I have said, I *have* said, and I will abide by it. I love you purely and truly; as man seldom loved a woman in his day. Throw aside this scorn of me. Love me as I deserve."

"Why do you follow me then, and watch me as if I were a slave? I tell you Monsieur La Force, that I will not endure it. I am not your slave, *yet*. And I never will be, while I have a voice to cry out against it."

"Girl," he said, hoarsely, striding up to her, and catching her by the shoulder in a strong grasp. "Beware how you trifle with me. It will not be best for you to do so."

"Take your hand from my shoulder."

"No haste," he said, with a sneer. "You have made me angry. Hear me out."

"Take your hand from me."

"I will not do it."

Young Carroll had listened to the conversation to this point. All the hot blood in his veins boiled up at the last outrage, and advancing a single step, he drew back his arm, and launched a blow full at the head of the Frenchmen. The blow was as good a one as ever he merited, and he went down

under it, as the ox goes down under the blow of the butcher with his mouth and nostrils swimming in gore. The moment the blow was struck he turned and ran away through the woods, knowing that he had betrayed himself by the blow. But flesh and blood are weak, and if his life had been forfeited by it, he would have struck that blow in spite of all.

The camp was aroused. Yells of rage and dismay filled the woods on every side, as the Frenchman was brought in, bleeding.

When he recovered his senses, he raved like a madman. And when the Indians, searching the woods by the light of the torches, found the dead body of their comrade, his anger knew no bounds. He burst into the lodge of Atta, and would have proceeded to other violence than that of the tongue, but was induced to leave the place by the Vulture, who, though he wished her out of the way, would not have her injured.

But he led her out into the open place in front of the lodge. There lay the body of the man whom Carroll had killed. A brawny savage, painted fiercely for the war-path, with a necklace of bears'-claws about his muscular throat.

"Who did this?" he demanded.

Looking down while she spoke, she asked how she should know. Indeed, Carroll had not said that he had killed a man, only that he had reached her over a bloody portal.

The chief looked at her in silence for a moment, and then, taking her hand, he led her back to the lodge, and dropped the curtain after her. Then calling La Force to his side, he went down to the spring, taking a torch in his hand. The ground about the spring was soft and received impressions of footprints easily. The Vulture held the torch close down, and read the green sward like a printed book. Footsteps light as that of the bird, dainty as the step of the red-deer, could be seen there. These he knew were the footprints of the prophetess. But another, much larger, attracted his attention. It was made by the firm, unyielding foot of a white man. Wah-ta-ha pointed to this with a grunt of displeasure.

"White man here," he said. "See."

La Force bent to examine the mark.

"Washington's rangers wear such boots," said he. "I have no doubt one of them was here. I only ask that I may meet

him some day, and if I do, may his good spirit stand by him well and stiffen up his sinews, for I will show him no mercy."

"Stood here," said the Vulture pointing to the tree. "Step out—so;" suiting the action to the word. "Strike hard, long arms. Ugh!"

"I see," said La Force, grimly. "I will make him rue the day he ever struck that blow," hissed the Frenchman, through his teeth. "He shall repent it in dust and ashes, curse him."

The Vulture was a man of few words, and all he said was to the point.

"Go back and sleep," he said. "When day come, find trail, mus' get his scalp."

They returned at once to the fire, and sat down to wait for morning. In the mean time the young soldier hurried away through the woods, and once out of danger, gave the signal upon which he had agreed with the hunter. It was answered at once, and in a few moments they met, and taking hands, ran for half a mile without stopping, as the yelling was rising fast and furious from the camp. They paused by mutual consent near the place where Carroll concealed his rifle.

"Well?" said the hunter, in a questioning tone.

"You hear them," said the young man.

"What raised such a row?"

"I think I have broken the head of our friend, La Force. I have struck many a good blow in my time, but none with such good will as the one I gave him."

"Ah! Then you struck him?"

"He took that girl by the shoulder as if she were a man. I thought he would have struck her, he was so angry. She told him to let her go. He did not, and I was within reach and so—"

"You struck him. Well, you saw her then?"

"I had a long talk with her."

"Why did you not bring her away?"

"Because she had promised that scoundrel that she would not attempt to escape to-night. She would not break her word."

"She keeps her faith well with a villain. But she is right. Have you given up the attempt?"

"No. I go to-morrow night."

"You will be taken."

"I care not. Having seen and talked with her, I would go through fire and water to do her a service. When I came away she asked me not to fail her. And so, God helping me, I will not."

"Did you speak to her of her birth? Did you ask her who were her parents, and how she came in the hands of the Shawnees? You should have asked her that," said the hunter eagerly.

"I did," said Carroll.

"And what did she say?"

"She had no idea. Taken when a child, she has lost all recollection of the manner in which it was done. She only knows that she was brought in by the Chief Wan-ta-ha."

"The Vulture?"

"Yes."

"I am racked by doubt. If this thought which comes into my brain to-night should be the true one, I shall be repaid for my weary years of suffering. If it should be true! If I have found her at last!"

"What are you thinking of?"

"My daughter. My darling Molly. The Vulture said she lived, and that he alone knows the place where she is to be found. As God is my judge, I believe that the prophetess is my daughter I lost, so many years ago."

"I shall not have a lukewarm companion now!" cried the young man, grasping the hand of the other. "You will be with me now in this matter. You will not think of danger, knowing what you do. We will force the truth from this devil upon earth, the Vulture. He shall say whether this is the child you have sought so many years, among all the tribes who came down from the North. I believe as you do, that you have found your child, and that you shall yet see many, very many happy days."

The hunter returned the cordial pressure of the young man's hand.

"If it should be all a dream, after all, if she should not be my child, I am afraid I should go mad. You have raised me to the skies, Carroll. Do not let me fall."

"You agree with me at least in this—the girl must be saved from La Force."

"Yes, yes. The sooner the better. I will be with you in this. In the mean time, we must find a place to hide, for the Indians are mad, and will be close upon the trail at early morning."

"Do you know any place to hide?"

"Many places which would do if they did not know the country. I should find one of the limestone caves and block up the entrance, but they know every hole of the kind as well as I do, and would notice any change. No, we must break the trail, and then get to the mountains. Yonder peak would do if we could reach it. I know a place upon that mountain where two resolute men could keep an army back. I do not think either of us would falter now."

"Not I, at least. Shall we go on to-night?"

"No. Lie down and get a little rest. I will wake you at the first light."

Taking a stone for his pillow, the hardy young soldier lay down beneath a tree, and slept as soundly as if he had been under his father's own roof. At early morning the hunter touched him, and told him it was time to be on the way. A gray mist was rising from the lowland in which they lay, hiding every object from view. This pleased the Indian-Slayer, for he knew that it would make the trail obscure and render pursuit slow.

Upon reaching the first creek, he plunged in at once, followed by his companion, and waded resolutely up stream through water now at the knees, then at the ankles, then to the thighs, keeping their guns and ammunition well out of harm's way. The course of the hunter was toward the mountain of which he had spoken the night before, a rocky peak, which Carroll could see rising through the gray mist a short distance in front. In a few moments they were clambering up the rocky side, toward the summit. Half way up the hunter paused, and listened. The savages were already on the move, and their signals could be heard rising out of the fog almost at their feet.

"We are very near their camp," said young Carroll. "Or else they have followed us very close."

"They have just started. If it had not been dark, you would have seen that the camp is just at the foot of this mountain."

"Then it will be very easy to make a descent upon them."

"I had that in my mind when I came to this place. They will hardly think of looking for us so near the camp. I think they will be puzzled to find our trail. Come on."

They went on slowly until the path seemed to end abruptly in a rocky wall, about as high as a man's head. After tossing his rifle to the top of this ledge, and bidding his companion do the same, the hunter seized the edge with his hands and climbed to the top. The place was a little gulch in the mountain-top, to which you could descend by the rough ledges. But upon the top was a platform about one hundred square feet in extent, completely concealed from the view of those on the level ground below by the natural battlement over which they had climbed. From their elevated perch, they could look down into the camp of the Indians dimly seen through the rising fog. The cries of the savages began to extend over a greater extent of plain, and the two men knew that they were out upon the trail, in search of the man who had slain their companion.

The fog lifted, and a grand panorama was exposed to view. On the right lay the higher ranges of the mountains, rising in successive ridges one above another, the towering peaks seeming to pierce the very sky. Below them lay a plain watered by many silver creeks, and from the midst of the plain rose the smoke of the Indian encampment, with its sylvan huts.

But few Indians remained in the encampment. The rest were following the trail. La Force, with an inveterate hate aroused by the blow he had received, led the pursuit. They could see him directing the movements of the Indians, and giving counsel to the chief.

Looking into the camp, they could see that Atta had come from her lodge, and was standing outside, eagerly questioning the men who came into camp from time to time, in regard to the success of the pursuit.

They gave it up at last, and returned to the camp. The day was spent by them in indolent enjoyment, and lying at

lazy ease under the tall trees. Toward afternoon there was a show of activity among them, as if preparing for the reception of some coming guests. About three in the afternoon there was a tumult, and a messenger came into the camp.

CHAPTER IX.

JUMONVILLE. A CAPTIVE.

THE messenger had not been long in camp, when a troop of French infantry, without music, marched into the camp. They were about forty in number, and looking like men worthy to fight in the cause of their country. Their leader was a young man, with an erect, military figure, who returned the greeting of La Force warmly, while a subaltern, Drouillon, took charge of the men. This unfortunate young officer, who was fated to fall at the beginning of his career, was Jumonville, of whose *murder* Washington was accused in the translation of the treaty by Jacob Van Braane.

He was a merry, light-hearted young man, who deserved a better fate than that which was his before two days had passed over his head. He took the arm of La Force, and led him aside.

"What have you done?" he said.

"Major Washington and his forces lie at a place called Little Meadows, on the 9th. For myself, as the war has not commenced, I have been in the settlement of Gist, (in search of deserters, I told them,) and have met Washington himself. If those accursed Virginians had not come to his aid, I should have had him a prisoner by this time."

"Has he a large force at this place?"

"Not very large. Not half ours."

"Listen, then, my friend. I am sent to tell the English to get out of the country, for it is ours. My orders are to hang back, and find out all I can of the force Washington has, so that we may be ready to drive him out in case he will not

go kindly, and between us as friends, I don't think he will. But we must be very circumspect. Between us, again, it is an open question whether they might not justly treat us as spies. When we have learned all we can, we will summon them to retire, and go on our way rejoicing."

"I understand. But why not go at once to Washington's camp? I will make pretexts enough to keep us there two or three days. I kept Washington a week at Venango, and made the poor Half-King so drunk that he danced the war-dance on the table. But I have something else to tell you."

"And what is that? My orders will not let me go to the English camp."

"Some cursed Englishman is lurking about this camp. Last night I was at the spring, talking with the prophetess, and somebody knocked me down. I have been kicked by a horse, in my time, and if I may have a choice, I say, let me be kicked again sooner than stand such a buffet as that."

"Ha, ha! You reason soundly. And did you find the rascal?"

"Not I. We found one of the Shawnees, however, with a knife-wound in his breast. The man must have been a hardy fellow, for it was one of the stoutest braves in the band."

"Did you find his trail?"

"Yes. There was another man with him, who, the Indians say, is the man known as the White Hunter. It would be a good deed to seize him. He is doing our cause great hurt among the Shawnees, for they fear him so greatly that they hardly dare to go out upon the war-trail when he is in the country. They look upon him as a very devil. I made my way into Washington's camp on purpose to see him, but the fellow had escaped and taken news to the rangers that their leader was in danger. They came down on the run, and scattered us to the four winds."

"This is really of moment. If our camp is known to these men, it will not do to stay here. We must change to-morrow."

"I would advise, by all means, change to-night. We have driven these fellows away, but they may return at any moment, hang on our trail, and report to Washington where we are. We should have him on our backs before the morning,

with Gist and Croghan, and the riflemen of the 'Wild Hunter of the Shawnee.' No, we must stay here."

"It shall be as you say, though my men are very weary, and want rest. Drouillon!"

The subaltern appeared.

"See that the men are ready to march in an hour. From what I have heard from Jean, it is not safe to stay here. Do you know other good places to pitch a camp, Jean?"

"Oh yes. Trust me for that. Let the men rest an hour. But, gracious heaven! what is that?"

The finger of the man pointed upward, with a wavering motion, as if in fear. The object which drew his attention was seen by all in the camp. Upon the highest pinnacle of the mountain which rose behind them, two huge figures stood out against the sky. Whatever the state of the atmosphere which caused the strange appearance, the figures were those of the two spies, who had come out upon the mountain to get a better view of the camp. By some strange freak, which the elements never seem to tire of playing, their figures were magnified to an alarming extent. Many of the Indians, uttering cries of terror, threw themselves prostrate upon the sod. The Vulture stood haughtily erect, regarding the figures with a wary eye. The sun, half hidden by a passing cloud, burst out in full splendor. The figures dwindled to their ordinary proportions, and the chief cried out aloud :

"Yonder is the Black Rifle. Yonder is the man who killed our brothers. Shawnees, if ye are not women, rise up and follow me!"

"We are discovered," said the hunter, looking at his companion. "This is the time to try of what stuff we are made. One of us must escape, and carry the news to Washington. The other must stay here and defend this mountain pass. Look down, and you will see that only one man can pass through the gorge at a time. We can stand here and pick them off two at a time. But when they come so fast that we can not keep them back longer, one of us must run, and the other stay to guard this place. Which shall it be?"

"I will do it," said the other. "I gave that girl my word that I would come into the camp and rescue her. I can not do that, but I can go in as a prisoner, and I will."

"Don't think that I will desert you," said the Black Rifle, eagerly. "I only escape to get help, and come to your aid. It is not far to the camp of Washington."

"Be it as you say. Here come the Indians. If that big chief comes in sight, I will mark him for life."

"No, no; do not shoot him. He is the only one who can tell us if yonder girl is my daughter. Promise me that he shall be safe in any case."

"I promise. Get ready your rifle."

The pass through which the Indians must come was scarcely three feet wide. As they came near it, a thought seemed to strike the hunter, and speaking to his companion, they leaped over the rocky wall and ran down to the mouth of the pass, leaving their rifles behind. It was a spot to make a new Thermopylæ. On one side stood the Indian-Slayer, strong, erect, stern, holding his knife and hatchet ready, and a look of steady determination upon his brave old face. On the other side stood the soldier, armed in a like manner, with the addition of pistols at his belt. The Indians could be heard scrambling up the rocky pass, yelling as Indians only can upon the war-path. Just before reaching the opening, there was a turn in the pass, which hid the first one from the sight of those directly behind him, so that they could not see his fate. The moment the tufted head appeared, the hatchet of the Indian-Slayer gleamed on high, and was buried to the very eye in the brain of the Indian, who sunk, a mass of quivering humanity, at the very feet of the destroyer. Another came on, and the weapon of the young soldier was reddened with his blood. For ten dreadful moments the men stood there, and every moment was death to an Indian. All the time the chief was calling to his men to push on, never dreaming that every man who had passed the opening was stark and stiff in death. Those who followed had heard the cries of those preceding, and had not thought them different from those of their comrades in the rear.

The eleventh man came on, and Carroll struck him. The Indian wore a head-dress of stout heron feathers, which bent and cracked like reeds. But the feathers were fastened in a pad of solid leather, which broke the force of the blow, and, instead of staggering forward as all the others had done, he

threw up his arms and went reeling back against the next man, who caught him in his arms, uttering a yell of dismay, and shouting back some words to the Indians in the rear. The result was a general stampede, and in five minutes the pass was clear, while the chief reviled them in the Shawnee tongue in words which other than Indians' lips could not have framed. But when he saw that so many of his men were left in the pass, he foamed with rage and ordered them again to the attack, after picking out five men for a hazardous service, of which he was to be the leader.

The Indians went up the pass from below more carefully, and the first man, a cool old warrior, held his weapons ready, and sprang out into the open space with a bound, eluding a blow from the hatchet of the Indian Slayer and a thrust from the hunting knife of his friend. Leaving Carroll to guard the pass, the hardy woodman sprang upon his new foe, and joined with him in a deadly encounter. The savage had the same arms as his enemy, and for a moment held him at bay. But, whirling round in the struggle, he saw that his young friend had a hard struggle to maintain the pass, and the sight seemed to steel his arm anew. Throwing himself upon his huge antagonist, he broke down his guard, and laid him prostrate by a blow from the hatchet. Springing to the aid of his friend, he happened to cast his eyes upward, and saw that the chief with his five men had reached the summit of the ridge. It was a bold and adventurous deed, for the ledge up which they had come to gain the summit, was almost perpendicular, and it was certain death to fall. Luckily, they had not been able to bring their firearms, or they could have picked off the two men from the ridge. Seeing that it must take them some time to descend, the hunter rushed on, and helped his companion to beat back the coming foe.

"Run for it now," he cried.

The two men dashed up the mountain and threw themselves over the rocky wall again. Up to this time not a shot had been fired, or the French, who remained idly looking on, would have advanced to the aid of their Indian friends. But the silent weapons had done fearful execution and sadly diminished the number of the band. As the first man emerged from the opening the famous rifle was lifted, and he went

down to add one more to that bloody pile blocking the mouth of the pass. Another man came out, and the rifle of Carroll spoke, and that Indian chased the deer in the hunting-grounds beside the Happy River. A shrill call from the chief now called his men to cover, and he sent down a message to Jumonville demanding aid, and stating the number of his dead. Jumonville was thunderstruck. "Mon Dieu!" he cried, "have they an army up there? I have only heard two rifles and thought the fight had only just begun."

The messenger explained how it was, dilating on the strength and fury of the two men. It was the fellow whose head-piece had saved him from the blow of Carroll, and he had a wholesome regard for the safety of his noddle. He represented the Indian-Slayer as being fully as high as they had seen him on the mountain, and with a tremendous ax, with which he split the heads of the Indians who entered the pass. Furthermore, flames issued from his mouth, accompanied by words in an unknown tongue. He was aided by a satellite nearly as tall as himself, who had wounded him on the head.

Jumonville took this story with the usual allowances, and ordered his men to be put in motion up the slope. In the mean time, not another shot had been fired, and the two spies were out of sight behind the bluff. Jumonville sent La Force with a flag, explaining that as they could not hope to defend the position successfully against his forces, it might be well to surrender. They asked half an hour to deliberate. It was granted, and the hunter availed himself of the time to make his escape.

This he accomplished by swinging himself down into the branches of a pine which grew close to the mountain. Reaching the ground, he stole across the open space below into a narrow gorge which concealed him from view. When the half hour was fully up, the young soldier agreed to give himself up and came down from the mountain. His arms were taken from him, and he was led into the presence of the chief, guarded by Indians.

"Where is the Wild Hunter?" asked the chief.

"He is gone."

"A Shawnee has eyes and can see that he is *gone*. But *where* has he gone and *how*? He has not wings to fly in the

air. Why has the Wild Hunter run away like a dog that puts its tail between its legs and runs away when there is danger? He has killed many braves, and now he is *gone*."

"When the chief was a prisoner, did he not escape? The talk of the chief is not good."

"Why does the green-coat come into the land of the Shawnees?" demanded the chief, angrily. "The land is ours and we will give it to our French fathers. But no Englishman shall live here. Always the Shawnees and Delawares have hated the Yengees. They are as dogs and the sons of dogs. We shall slay them all."

"Do not make the chief more angry than he is," said La Force. "You will have trouble enough as it is, since you have killed so many of his men."

"Listen!" cried the Vulture; "and see that you speak true. Where is the Wild Hunter of the Shawnee?"

"He left me on the hill. What had I to do with him?"

"He is ours," answered the chief, "and we will have him." Calling to his side an active looking brave, he gave him some directions in a low tone, which he hurried off to execute. In less than ten minutes from that time half a dozen runners, under his leadership, had struck the trail of the Indian-Slayer, and followed, determined to hunt him to the death.

Carroll was led down into the camp, and preparations were made for leaving it immediately. But the dead were to be buried, and in the hurry incident to the work, the prisoner was bound to a tree and left to his own reflections. While in this position Atta-Cara's light touch fell upon his shoulder.

He turned quickly, and greeted her with a beaming smile, and a look of admiration which even his position could not change. He had come to her as he had promised but not as he had hoped. There was a world of commiseration in her beautiful face as it was upturned to his own.

"You have brought yourself into danger for me," she said, in a low, sweet voice, different from the ringing tone in which she had addressed the Indian. "I am very sorry."

"Thank you. That repays me for all. Will you not believe that I am ready to do any thing for you? I will save you from that scoundrel, if I can."

"Have you made the Vulture very angry?"

"I am afraid I have. But I surrendered to the French."

"Do not depend upon that. The French never interfere with their Indians. They will give you up to them if they ask for you. Have you killed any of their men?"

"See them yonder," he answered.

The Indians were coming down the side of the mountain, bearing their dead. As Atta saw the number of corpses, she gave a start, for she knew that the young soldier could expect nothing but the ordeal of the twelve fires. The faces of the Indians were gloomy as they came in from their sad errand and made ready for their departure. Atta left the side of the prisoner, saying that she must not be seen talking with him, lest she should be watched. They broke camp in the course of half an hour, marched three miles and made a new camp in the midst of the woods. As before, they fell to work making lodges, and in a short time a miniature village had grown up in the wilderness. Carroll was put in one of the largest lodges under a strong guard.

When the hunter dropped from the body of the pine tree, and made his way into the gorge, he hurried forward at a brisk pace, anxious to put as much space as possible between himself and the hill. He knew that the vindictive Indian would send runners on his trail, and he was hardly in a condition to meet them. In the encounter with the savage the last time, he had been wounded on the arm, and the cut had bled profusely, making him weaker than he would have liked to admit. He hurried on, however, but before he had gone three miles he was satisfied that the runners were upon his track.

The man whom the Vulture had selected for the perilous task of capturing the redoubtable Indian-Slayer, was well chosen. From the facility with which he was able to follow a blind path, he had obtained an Indian name, signifying the Trailer. Among the French he was known as Le Diable, from the celerity of his movements, and a habit of using black paint. He was brave in battle, unapproachable in the use of the hatchet, and a swift runner.

It was in the afternoon of a remarkably clear day in May, and the trail was plain before them, for the hunter was in

such haste that he had no time to cover it. Hence the Indians were able to follow it almost on the run, with the Trailer at their head. Toiling up the slope of the last ridge before he reached the level country, near which Washington lay encamped, the hunter looked back, and saw the Indians issuing from the woods in close pursuit, not a quarter of a mile away. The sight lent him new energy, and he bounded on with a speed equal to that of all but the Trailer, whom he could see at a glance was his superior. But he never faltered, but pressed steadily on, until he reached the summit. They had seen him, and were yelling like all the under fiends. Two passed around the foot of the mountain to a well-known pass, and the other five followed him up the hill. From the place where he stood he could see the river gleaming in the sunshine a hundred feet below. There was no descent from this point, and he ran farther down, when the two Indians, who had been sent round by the path to meet him, appeared in the path coming up. The path through the pass was shorter than that over the summit, and they were before him.

An angry flush rose to the forehead of the hunter, and taking a station on a commanding point, he called upon the Indians to halt. "Go back," he said, "I hate your race; but there is blood enough on my hands for this day. Let me go away safely."

The Indians were near enough to hear his voice, and answered by a derisive laugh. "We will not go back," said the Trailer; "the Wild Hunter has run his race, and his scalp must hang in the smoke of a Shawnee wigwam."

"Not in yours," said the hunter, taking his rifle from his back. "I give you one more chance. Go back as you came, and it shall be well between us."

The Trailer laughed again, and the long rifle came sharply to the shoulder of the hunter. If the Trailer reckoned on the time it would take for an aim to get under cover, he reckoned without his host. The breech of the rifle had barely touched his shoulder, when the report rang out sharp and clear, and the Trailer had run the last man to earth, and fell, with a bullet in his brain.

But six men against an antagonist with an empty rifle in his hand are bold, and the Indians gave him no time to re-

load. He turned and ran up the mountain farther, until he reached a place full eighty feet above the river, which at this point was very deep. The descent of the wall was so steep, that he could clear it with a leap. Kissing his trusty rifle as if it had been a sweetheart, he laid it reverently down upon the rock, flung his hatchet full in the face of a savage who was climbing up toward him, and then leaped.

While the body yet quivered in the air, three of the savages got sight at him with their rifles, and pulled trigger. The next moment he struck the water and disappeared, leaving a dark red stain. The Indians crept out to the edge of the bluff, and looked down. The water had closed above the spot, and the ripples had ceased, but he did not rise. To all appearance the Trailer was right when he said that the race of the Wild Hunter was run.

After waiting half an hour for some sign of him, the Indians turned back, and buried the dead warrior. Then, collecting the trophies of the hunter, they returned to camp, and told that the hunter was dead.

CHAPTER X.

A STROKE FOR LIBERTY.

CARROLL was not the man to fold his hands idly when he had any chance of escape. As soon as the guard had been placed, he set to work relieving himself of his bonds. These consisted of cords drawn tightly at the ankle, knee, and elbow, so that he was forced to lie at length upon the floor of the hut. To free himself from the fetters at the elbow was the first thought, and he began to work his arms up and down and with great pain to himself and much chafing, he was able to work one of the cords down below the elbow. Rolling over and over, he reached one of the poles which supported the lodge, and managed to struggle to his feet against it. There was a hard knot upon it, which came almost to an edge, and he began to work his elbows up

and down on this. Tireless as the man who digs a way through a solid wall which stands between him and liberty, he worked on. An hour passed, and he was still at his work. But he felt that the cord was cracking under the efforts he was making, and throwing his great muscular power into his strong arms, he burst the frail thread which still hung together, and the bonds upon his arms dropped to the ground.

To stoop and untie the cords at his knees and then at his ankles, was the work of a moment, and he stood within that hut a free man, but he was so weak and benumbed by the tightness of the cords, that the moment he was no longer supported by them he fell to the ground.

Raising himself to a sitting posture, he began to rub his limbs vigorously, to get back the slackened circulation, and succeeded so well that in a few moments he was able to rise again to his feet, and peep out at the door of the lodge. The guard in front stood about ten feet away, leaning against the trunk of a small tree. He had a hatchet and knife in his belt, and was a determined-looking fellow enough, and brother to the "Trailer," whose friends had come in an hour before with news of his death. He would watch over the man who must be sacrificed for the life of his brother, and the many braves they had buried who had died at the mountain pass.

The prisoner went to the back of the tent, and found a small opening among the branches, which were twisted in to form the walls. From this he could see that a guard was placed in the rear, who was equally watchful. Going to the sides he found the same here.

Searching about on the ground at the foot of the wall, he found a hickory club, about five feet long and four inches in circumference. This would do for a weapon, for the want of a better. But he could do nothing while the moon shone so brightly. It would be down in an hour, and arranging the cords loosely on his limbs, in case one of the enemy should look in, he lay down and waited for darkness.

Once the guard in front came and looked in at the door; but the prisoner was lying on his side, with his face toward the door, and appeared to be sleeping. The savage went

away again. Then the darkness came, and the young sergeant nerved himself for the work before him.

Grasping the club, ready to strike the first object which came in his way, he pushed aside the curtain. The only light came from the stars, and he could just make out the figure of the Indian leaning against the post.

Dropping upon all fours, and keeping against the side of the lodge, he got away from the door, and advanced boldly toward the guard, whom he knew must be met. So sudden was his advance, that he was within striking distance before he was seen. A short ejaculation, a sudden blow, and Carroll had bounded over the prostrate form of the Indian, whirling his weapon over his head.

The wild cry of the Indian had aroused the camp, and the guards were on his track before he passed the tree against which the Indian had been leaning. In the darkness of the forest he knew not which way to run, so he kept on the course he had first taken; but lights were flashing through the woods in all directions, and French cries mingled with those of the savages. The young man was not surprised, when an erect military figure rose suddenly in the path before him, with a stern,

"Qui vive?"

"A friend of France," he answered, in French.

"Non! enemie de la France. En avant."

"Can you speak English?"

"Non."

The words of the two brought up the sergeant of the guard, who knew a few words of English. "Who are you?" he said.

"An Englishman. I have escaped from the Indians and demand to be led to your commander."

"It shall be done, mon camarade. Let us go to him at once."

He took him by the arm in a friendly manner, and led him away. Five or six soldiers were obliging enough to accompany them, of course merely in a friendly spirit. Jumonville and La Force were standing together at the door of the hut which they had made their headquarters, and cursing the uproar which would tell every Indian who might be prowling

in the neighborhood, where he had made his camp. The jovial face of the young commander was clouded as the guard approached.

"How is this, Drouillon? Was all this noise necessary?"

"Sire," said Drouillon, saluting, "the English prisoner who was taken by the Indians has escaped, and fallen into our hands."

"Where is he?"

"Here, sire," replied the sergeant, pushing the prisoner to the front. "He demanded to be brought to you."

The young men looked at each other in silence for a few moments.

"What is your name?" demanded Jumonville. "Give an account of yourself."

"Although I do not recognize your right to ask it in that way, I will tell you that I am an Englishman, a soldier in Washington's Rangers, who was taken prisoner yesterday by the Indians. My name is James Carroll."

"I heard that such had been the case, though I have had no time to see you. You escaped to-night?"

"I did; and if it had not been for your men I should be safe. I demand your protection."

"Upon what grounds?"

"As you are a man and a soldier. Is not that enough?"

"It is enough," said Jumonville. "I will see that you have no wrong. Sergeant Drouillon, I give this gentleman into your charge. If you will give me your honor not to attempt to escape, you shall have the range of the camp."

"I give you my honor that I will not attempt to escape for the present. If I change my mind, I will tell you."

"Good-night," said Jumonville, "and good rest."

"Good-night," repeated Carroll.

"By my soul, brother," said the jolly French sergeant, as they walked away arm-in-arm, "you know right well how to reach the heart of a man. There is no appeal which you could make to our gallant captain, which would touch him half as quickly as that. 'A man and soldier?' He is a man like the peerless Bayard—*Sans peur et sans reproche!* You did well to appeal to him, then. Did you kill any of the savages in your escape?"

"I had a club in my hand," replied Carroll, "and I struck a man who stood in my path. Whether he is dead or no I can not tell."

Drouillon touched the arm of the speaker, felt the folds of stout muscles rising one above another, and said, with a light laugh, "He is dead."

"Why?"

"When a man with such an arm as that strikes in anger, woe to the object. But come; we are now at my quarters; take a rest for this night, for by my soul, to-morrow may be a busy day to some one."

Carroll thanked him and went into the hut. Drouillon gave him a blanket, a knapsack for a pillow, a cup of liquor, and left him to his rest. He slept as only a man can who has fought and run a weary day through. He woke at early morning, and walked out into the camp. Here, by some chance, he met La Force.

"I have looked for you a long time, young sir," said the agent. "Last night, when my friend the captain gave you your parole, I said nothing, for I had something to say to you which I did not care to have reach other ears. Perhaps you may remember me?"

"I do remember your face, sir, and with your face I am familiar. You are called Jean La Force."

"Right. You will call to mind the time on which you remember meeting me."

"It was at the spring on the outskirts of your old camp. You were speaking with the English girl called Attacara."

"English, did you say?"

"English."

"Who told you?"—then correcting himself—"What do you mean by calling her English?"

"By the best authority in the world, my dear sir."

"And that?"

"Is her own."

"Ah! then you have spoken with her?"

"I have. With my will, it shall not be the last time."

"You had been speaking with her on that night at the spring?"

"My dear sir, your penetration is truly surprising; it is indeed."

"You flatter me. You heard my conversation with this Indian girl?"

"English. Allow me to correct."

"You persist in calling her English."

"I must, having her authority."

"Very well, then; you heard my conversation with this Indian—English girl, pardon me, at the spring on that evening?"

"I did."

"Was it the act of a gentleman?"

"I was with her when you came, and it was impossible for me to get away. I was leaning against a tree, so near you, that if I had attempted to escape, then, you would have detected me at once."

"Ah! then you struck me? Why?"

"Because you were insulting a woman. You will not deny that you used bad language to her, and took her by the shoulder."

"No matter. I demand satisfaction for that blow."

It must be remembered that in these early days the code of honor was the law to guide mens' actions. An insult brought a blow, and the blow a challenge. Then two men would go out under God's blue sky, and the lucky man would kill or maim the other. This they called giving satisfaction. It would have been more manly, if fight they must, to go out and fight with the weapons God gave.

"I am ready to meet you."

"Choose your weapons."

"Sword and dagger."

"What sword do you use?"

"The double-edged cut-and-thrust is my weapon. Being unarmed you must supply me with a weapon."

"Oh, certainly. That shall be my care. It will be well to get the matter over to-day. You of course understand sword-play or you would not choose that weapon."

"I play a little."

"That is well, for I pride myself somewhat upon the use of the sword. It is a Frenchman's weapon."

They parted, and Carroll went away in search of Drouillon,

who was the only man whom he could ask to act as his second in the affair. What Frenchman would refuse such an office? and Drouillon expressed himself charmed that they were to have a bit of sport. He went away and met the second of La Force, another sergeant, and arranged the meeting. They were to fight in the afternoon, in the open ground of the camp, in the presence of the whole force.

Atta-Cara came to the sergeant as he sat under an oak tree, tightening a buckle of his sword-belt which had been loosened in his perilous tramps in the forest. There was an expression of the greatest concern upon her lovely face.

"You are going to fight this man," she said, eagerly.

"Certainly. I struck him, and he has the right to demand satisfaction. It is a strange thing; you may lay a man's shoulder open, or run a sword through his body and not a word will be said. But strike him, and he will not be satisfied unless you run him through the body in addition to the blow. *My* man now has had the *blow*, and nothing will do but I must perform the other office for him."

"But you must not fight. I have heard the French talk, and they say he is the best swordsman in the Province. You will be killed."

"I hope not. I have some reputation as a swordsman. My fencing-master, Van Braane, can do nothing with me."

"Still I am troubled. I wish you would promise not to fight."

"I am glad you take an interest in my fate," he said, looking into her eyes, which were downcast in a moment. "It will give me nerve in the battle. Believe me, I shall fight the better."

"You would not have been in this danger but for me. I should be ungrateful if I did not feel an interest in your fate."

They were standing under the trees a little apart from the camp. He took her hand and led her further into the shadow, and spoke rapidly, but to the point. They were blunt wooers "in our grandfathers' days."

"I love you," he said. "You may be angry with me for the presumption, but my love will remain the same. Give me the right, as I fight this battle, to fight for one I love, and I shall do well."

She was silent, but her bosom rose and fell tumultuously.

"Your beauty and graces have won upon me, from the moment I heard you speak so boldly and so well in the cause of the English, at the council-fire. I was near you then. I saw you escape from the hands of your captor, and get away into the woods. You were brought back and we followed you. We would have saved you, too, if we had not shown ourselves upon the mountain. I am not sorry for it, since it has given me the opportunity to speak to you. We are of the same blood. Say even that you may learn to love me."

"Let it rest so," she said, looking up timidly. "I have no cause to hate you."

Such a confession was enough for a lover. He raised her hand to his lips, and she did not repel him. Passing his arm about her, he led her farther away from the camp, and they sat down together upon a sunny bank.

"Have you any remembrance of your childhood, my darling?" he said.

"Some, not very distinct."

"What do you remember?"

"A cabin by the side of a shining river. A woman who used to take me in her arms and kiss me. Then comes a blank. I can not remember. I have tried again and again. I have asked the Vulture and he will not tell me."

"It all lies with him, then."

"Can you speak our language?" he said. Every word they had spoken was in French.

"Oh, yes." she replied, with a smile, breaking into English and speaking it with a fluency which astonished him. "You can not tell how I have clung to that language. There was a prisoner, an Englishman, who was among us for years, and who died in the tribe. We used to have long talks together. He died when I was fifteen years old, and I was lonely. But I kept the language. Do I speak it well?"

"So well," he replied, caressing her, "that we will have no more of this French jabber, but talk good, blunt English. Shall I say again that I love you in our own native English? Perhaps it would sound better."

"I can not tell," she said, demurely.

At this interesting stage the interview was interrupted, and

both rose. La Force was coming toward them, carrying two swords and daggers in his hands. Atta started up with a faint cry, and threw herself before her lover.

"I am sorry to interrupt so very interesting a tête-à-tête," he said, with a sneer. "I beg your pardon, especially. I shall make it so that I will never have cause to break up another meeting. Monsieur, I have brought the swords. Will you choose?"

"Are you going to fight now?" she said, faintly.

"No—do not fear," replied her lover. "Monsieur is so kind as to lend me a weapon. I think you had better leave us now."

"You will fight if I go."

"Upon my honor, no."

"And mine," said La Force. "I will bide my hour. It will come soon enough for you both."

Atta went away and the two men were left alone. The swords were straight, sharp weapons, very much alike. Carroll made his choice, fitted his hand to a dagger, and was armed. It was a hard trial for the two men, hating each other as they did, and holding weapons in their hands, to refrain from battle. But each had given his word, and they went back side by side, like brothers, not like mortal foes.

La Force, after parting with his enemy, called Atta aside from the rest. His face was gloomy, and stern determination sat upon his brow.

"You love that soldier," he said, without any appearance of anger, "and for this reason I have called him out; I know the result, he will die, and you will be the one who will kill him."

She looked him steadily in the face. "You speak as if you are sure. I have confidence in your enemy. All things are in the hands of the Great Spirit; if he dies it is his destiny, and who shall fight against fate?"

"I have fought three duels in my time," answered La Force, "with the first swordsmen of the provinces; I always conquered. I shall not fail now."

"You can not change the designs of the Great Spirit. If the young man is to die by your hand he must, and I, a weak woman, will avenge him. If, on the other hand, he has

longer to live, *you* can not kill him. Go, you are foolish, if you think to frighten me."

He flung angrily away from her, and went out into the woods with his second and tried the strength of his sword with him. In the afternoon the soldiers gathered to see the duel.

The Indians were there, gloomy and angry. The Vulture had demanded the young soldier as their prisoner that they might try him according to their law. But Jumonville refused, saying that the soldier had escaped, and would not have been retaken by the Indians, and that he was now the property of the French. Hating him as the Vulture did, he took some comfort from the fact that La Force would certainly kill him, and came to see the fight. Atta was there, standing apart from the rest, determined that no unfair advantage should be taken by the French; she had a bow in her hand, and two arrows with broad steel heads loose in her belt. Jumonville noticed that she was armed, and asked her why.

"If La Force takes an unfair advantage of the Englishman," was the reply, "I will bury a broad arrow to the feather in his black heart."

Those who knew the prophetess were tolerably certain that she would keep her word.

"There shall be no such advantage taken," said Jumonville. "I pledge you my word as a soldier."

The two men stood up together, calm and confident. La Force was tallest of the two and his sinews were braced to iron firmness. Carroll was also a fine specimen of forest comeliness; his bearing was erect and soldier-like, as he took his position, holding the dagger in his left hand, as he did during the entire duel.

"Fight!" cried Jumonville as coolly as an umpire would call "play" in a base-ball match. The young men crossed swords, each keeping his sword well up and playing for the vital parts of the other. Sparks flew from the hissing steel, and Jean La Force knew that the man with whom he fought was no common enemy. He fought upon the defensive, making the dagger act as a shield. Twice he turned aside a stroke which would have been death to him, upon the short steel blade, and when he had wounded La Force in his attempts to

get in a blow, he suddenly threw off his tactics and began to attack with an impetuosity and skill which nothing could resist. Jean La Force was borne back, fighting foot by foot; blood appeared upon his shoulder and breast, while the other was only slightly wounded on the left hand by a glancing blow upon the dagger. Atta held her breath, proud of the prowess of her accepted lover, as he cut and thrust at the head of his enemy, who had enough to do to defend himself without renewing his first attack. A perfect hailstorm of blows rattled upon the blade of the Frenchman, who defended himself with a skill worthy of his great fame.

"Awake, La Force, thou sleepest," said Jumonville, unconsciously using the words of the great Trojan to his brother. La Force rushed on his enemy with a new vigor, and for a time the tables seemed turned, and all the blows came from his side; but the ranger showed himself as skillful in defense as he was in attack, and the blows fell innocuous upon his steel.

"By my faith," cried Jumonville, "he is a gallant man, and more than a match for La Force. There, there!"

The tables had turned again, and La Force was wounded in the left arm. He kept up for a time, fighting desperately, conscious of the fact that Atta was looking on, and seeing him beaten after all that had been said. Stepping back, he stumbled and came to his knee. Carroll dropped his point and allowed him to rise. The combat was about to be renewed when Jumonville interferred.

"Thou shalt not go on, Jean," he said.

"How? Shall not."

"He has spared your life; he had you on your knee with his point at your throat. Come, be a man, give him your hand, and say you are satisfied."

"I am not beaten," said La Force.

"You are! If you make this a duel to the death, you are a dead man. Pish! be satisfied."

La Force sheathed his sword, and advanced toward Carroll, who stood at ease, careless whether he continued the combat or not.

"You have met me well," said the Frenchman, and have given worthy satisfaction for the blow, if three such cuts as these may be called satisfaction."

They shook hands.

"I am still your enemy," whispered La Force. "You have come in good time to witness a wedding. Ho, there, Vulture, seize her and take her to my lodge."

"What means this outrage, Jean La Force?" cried the young officer.

"This is no outrage, Jumonville. Do not attempt to thwart me in this. Yonder girl must be my wife; I have sworn it; I give up my love affairs at no man's pleasure, I."

"But why this rudeness?"

"Oh, content you. The girl has given me trouble all along, and to-night I will make her my wife. Read this, and see if you *dare* interfere with me."

"Dare is a hard word, Monsieur La Force," said the young Frenchman, taking the note which the other extended.

"Read it aloud," said La Force."

"Let no Frenchman interfere to prevent the marriage of Jean La Force and the girl known as Atta-Cara. It will be a new link to bind us to the great tribe of the Shawnees.

JONCAIRE, agent."

"Why does he meddle with such dirty work?" muttered the young Frenchman. "Jean, as I am alive, if I had thought this, you should have fought your battle out with the Englishman."

"I am glad you interfered," answered La Force. "I invite all to my wedding. Where is the Jesuit?"

CHAPTER XI.

THE DOUBLE SURPRISE, AND SOMETHING ELSE.

WHEN the Indian-Slayer fell from that giddy height into the water of the deep river, he was wounded in the arm by a chance ball. The blood which flowed from the wound was seen by the savages, who pronounced him dead. But he knew that they were watching, with ready rifles, and would riddle him with balls the moment his head appeared above

the surface of the stream. When he sunk, he swam under water until he reached the perpendicular wall of the stream, at a place where the rock bulged out in such a manner as to shield him from view. Here, holding on by a fragment of rock, he waited until the Indians became convinced that he was gone, and went away, taking with them all the weapons of the Indian Slayer except the knife in his belt.

When certain that they had gone away, he pushed out into the stream, and swam down to a place where he could land. Here he bound up his wounded arm, and rose to his feet. As he did so, he became aware that a rifle was pointed at him from behind a rock, while a stuttering voice called out to him to "look out, for it was a-comin'!"

"Seems to me I ought to know that voice," thought the Indian-Slayer. "Josh?"

"You git out!" cried a well-known voice. "You are an Indian."

"What is all that noise about, Josh?" demanded a stern voice.

"It's an Indian, Chris, a trying to make believe he's Captain Jack."

At this moment a clear whistle, one which they had used to call each other in other days, went sounding through the woods, clear and shrill. No one but the Indian-Slayer could do that.

"Oh, Lord!" cried Josh "it's his ghost."

Christopher Gist dashed the youngster aside, and sprang down toward the ghost. In a moment he had him by the hand, and was shaking it heartily, with tears of joy running down his brown cheeks.

"We thought you were dead, old lad," he said. "We gave you up."

"Who told you?"

"Tanacharisson sent in a messenger, who said that you were killed, and that the sergeant was a prisoner on the mountains yonder."

"The sergeant is a prisoner, poor lad," said the hunter, "and I was never nearer my death than I was half an hour ago; you had better believe it. I jumped from the rock yonder into the river."

me the land was his, and lo ! he has taken it, and we have not a place we can call our own."

"How many French did the runner see?"

Tanacharisson held up his extended hands four times.

"So many. How many Indians?"

Tanacharisson held up his hands twice.

"The Vulture is in the woods, and he is a brave man; but he has taken the pay of the French, and wears their belts. Joncaire has made a speech to the tribes at Venango. Those who have taken the French belts are eager for scalps."

"Why do you fear the Vulture?"

"A bad spirit keeps him; he has the strength of ten men. There is no man he fears but the Wild Hunter."

"The Wild Hunter is here," said Washington.

"Ugh!" cried the chief, much terrified. "He is a devil, the Indians fear him."

"He hates the Vulture and fights on our side. He will not strike the friends of the English. Can you guide us to the place where the French lie?"

"My young men know the way."

"Let us go at once."

In a few moments the troops were marching on through the darkness in the direction of the French camp where La Force was making preparations for his marriage. The Jesuit who accompanied him had agreed to perform the ceremony, whether the girl was willing or not. Jumonville had appealed to the sense of honor of the Frenchman, but in vain. Atta had claimed his protection, but he could not give it; his superior officer had said that the marriage was for the good of France and he dared not interfere. The preparations began late and it was eleven o'clock when Atta was dragged out, for she would not go willingly, to the unwelcome marriage. Carroll was there, foaming with anger, and it needed the bayonets of the guard to keep him from springing at the throat of the sneering Frenchman, who, seizing the wrist of the struggling girl, dragged her in front of the priest. All around them stood the French, holding up torches to light the open space. A little to one side, Carroll was struggling in the grasp of two men. Near him Jumonville, biting his lip until the blood started, with his hand upon his sword hilt.

"Go on, good Father," said the latter, addressing the priest.

The ceremony commenced, but was interrupted by the deep voice of the sergeant.

"For your life! Jean La Force. If you do this wrong, I will murder you."

"Muzzle that fellow, if he speaks again," cried La Force.

"Oh, that I had you once more upon your knee, with a sword-point at your throat! Your blood should stain the green sward."

"Go on," replied La Force. "Sdeath! priest, why do you hesitate?"

The Jesuit again commenced. La Force made the response in a threatening tone. "I will," sounded out like a challenge. When the question was put to Atta, she answered by a loud "no," at the same time shrieking, "will no one aid me?"

A response came. Breaking away from the guard, Carroll threw himself upon La Force and took him by the throat. The onset was so sudden that he was borne down upon his knee, and while they struggled vindictively, a shot came from one of the videttes, followed by a close volley. The camp was attacked.

The young men separated and sprang to their feet. In that moment of deadly peril, La Force thought of her.

"Get her to a safe place, man," he cried. "To your arms, men... Where is Jumonville?"

Where? They were lifting him from the ground, with the mark of a bullet in his forehead. The brave young fellow had died at the first volley. Afterwards, the French made use of this act to the discredit of the father of his country, terming it the "murder of De Jumonville."

The rattling of firearms was now incessant, and Carroll hurried his charge to one of the huts. As he would not join in the battle, being still under his parole, so he stood in the lodge door and watched the progress of the battle. A close fire was poured in from all quarters, which the French returned briskly, though their men were falling on every side. The French tired of it first and turned to run. But finding themselves hemmed in on all sides and escape impossible, they yielded. Twenty-one were captured, and ten slain outright. Among the latter, the brave but unfortunate Jumonville.

The Vulture glared about him like a baited bear and catching sight of the young soldier at the door of the lodge, rushed at him with uplifted hatchet. Carroll had retained the sword lent him by La Force, which he now drew, and received a blow upon the blade.

"Stand back!" he cried, "or I will do you an injury."

"Ah, ha! the Vulture!" was the reply, as he struck again.

"Be careful," said the soldier. The only answer was a downright blow, which glanced and inflicted a painful wound in the shoulder. "You will have it!" he cried. "Look out."

They joined in desperate battle, the young soldier cutting and thrusting with his sword, while his left hand was laid upon the hilt of his dagger. As they closed in a mad fray, the cry arose that "all was lost," and the fugitives hurried by. Rising above his enemy like a strong tower, and striking heavy blows, though wounded in half a dozen places already, for his hatchet was no match for the sword, the Indian fought on, his painted face looking like that of a demon under the waning light of a torch, which one of the savages held up to light the scene.

"Yield!" said Carroll, moved by the undaunted bravery of his opponent.

"I do not know what that means," gasped the Vulture.

A sad light came into the eyes of the soldier, and he closed in with a desperate determination to end all at once. He drew the dagger and struck out, a single, desperate blow over the collar-bone of the Indian. He fell, with the blood bubbling from many wounds. The Indian who held the torch flung it down and fled. Carroll lifted it and knelt by the side of the dying man, who regarded him with a strange look.

"White man, you have triumphed, and the name of Wah-ta-ha, the Vulture, shall be heard of no more in the Shawnee lodges. He will go to the happy hunting-grounds and be happy."

Carroll lifted his head upon his knee and looked at his many wounds; but he stopped the friendly hand with his own.

"No," he said, "the end is come. The blood bubbles up in my throat. I can not speak."

Carroll made a signal to Atta, and she brought a gourd

from the lodge, containing water. The chief took it from her hand, but had not strength to raise it to his lips. She took it again and gave him drink.

"Atta-Cara," he said, in a faint voice, "I gave you the name. When you were a child I took you away from an English home and made you great among the Shawnees. I thought you would be true to the Shawnees. But blood is not water and your heart went out after your own people. It is the law of the Great Spirit. I can not blame you. I am all Shawnee. I hate the English, and curse them with my dying breath. But you have never wronged me. Listen. I will tell you where you were born."

Both bent forward in eager interest. A dark form, standing just outside the circle of light made by the torch, made a forward motion, while the prisoners and soldiers of Washington stood farther away.

"A white man built a cabin upon the Juniata. He was a hunter, and he wronged no man. But he was English. While he was away on the mountains I came—the Vulture! I killed his wife, I took his child. Her name is Atta-Cara. The father came back, and saw his wife lie dead beside the smoking ruins, and his child gone. Many a time since that hour the Shawnees have had cause to fear the man they made mad, until men called him the Wild Hunter of the Juniata!"

Carroll uttered a cry. "You know him?" cried Atta; "you know my poor father?"

"He is dead," said the Indian; "dead, and his body lies under the waters of the river. My young men hunted him to death."

Atta fell upon her knees, and dropped her face upon her clasped hands, moaning, "And I shall never see him, never see my father's face!"

The dark figure made a sudden bound, and clasped the kneeling form in his arms. It was the Indian-Slayer. His rough face seemed glorified. Tears of joy were running down his cheeks.

"Who is this?" cried Atta, bewildered.

The Indian answered. Raising himself upon his elbow, as if he saw a spirit, he shouted, "The Wild Hunter of the Juniata!" fell back and expired. Atta lifted herself, flung

her arms about her father's neck, and laid her head upon his manly breast. That moment more than repaid them for years of suffering. And never, since the hour he led his loved wife over his humble threshold, had the heart of that brave man felt such rapture, as now, with the head of his long-lost daughter pillow'd on his breast.

La Force had been taken. Indeed, of all that company, only one escaped to carry the news to Du Querne. The wily Frenchman had been brought back in time to see that Atta-Cara was lost to him for ever, and was then led into the presence of Washington.

Shortly afterward, he was sent to Governor Dinwiddie, and paid the penalty of his crimes. He was put into prison, and confined for two years, the rigor used being greater than Washington desired, though not greater than he deserved.

Captain Jack, fearing that his daughter might be killed or injured in the coming battles, took her to Philadelphia and left her there, when he returned and employed himself and band in defending the scattered families along the Juniata, who, during this year were exposed to deadly peril. To this day he is known and revered along the river.

Two years after, Carroll went to Philadelphia, in company with the old hunter. They found Atta, or Molly, improved by intercourse with her own people; but when Carroll asked her the question he had longed to ask her before, she put her hand in his, and said she would follow him to the home he had made for her at Winchester. They were married and lived happily for many years.

Josh followed the fortunes of his old master, who had become so used to the life on the river that he could not give it up, even for the society of his daughter. But his winters were spent with her, and every summer he came to see them once, accompanied by the faithful Josh. Little need be said of Christopher Gist, whose name stands out so broadly in colonial history. Often, when Captain Jack came down to Winchester to see his daughter, he accompanied him, and was as pleased as he in seeing the sometime Prophetess of the Shawnee a happy wife and mother.

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